

BULLETIN

volume 82, issue 8 *August 2008*

Inside this issue

Contact Information	2
Editor's Message	2,3
Public Star Party Information	3
Mt. Wilson Nights.....	4
ATTENTION: Dues Increased	4,5
Call for Mt. Wilson Volunteers	5,6
Article: This Month in the Sky	6-8
Images: Griffith Public Star Party	8,9
Equipment for Sale	9
Images from the New Member Party.....	10,11
Alternate Route to Griffith	12
Outreach Program	12
Vintage Questar 3.5-inch telescope for sale	13
Map to Monterey Park Facility	13
Loaner Corner	14
Events Calendar	15
LAAS Yahoo Group: How to Join	16
Sky and Telescope Club Subscriptions	16
Astronomy Subscriptions	16
New Members Coordinator Corner.....	16
Membership Information	16

**OUR 82nd YEAR OF
ASTRONOMY IN LOS
ANGELES**

Los Angeles Astronomical Society
Griffith Observatory
2800 East Observatory Road
Los Angeles, CA 90027

Change of Address, Membership:
Stephen Dashiell, LAAS Secretary

LAAS Officers:

President.....David Sovereign
(626) 794-0646
Vice President Mary Brown
nwwrgz@yahoo.com
Treasurer Herbert Kraus
Treasurer@laas.org
Secretary.....Stephen Dashiell
Secretary@laas.org
Recording Secretary PJ Goldfinger
pj@chara-array.org
Richard Roosman

Volunteers:

Library Mary Brown
nwwrgz@yahoo.com
Outreach..... Don DeGregori
& Herbert Kraus
Outreach@laas.org
Loaner Scopes Dave Sovereign
(626) 794-0646
Messier Program Norman Vargas
(626) 288-4397
New Members.....(No current contact)
Coordinator@laas.org
Speakers Bureau Tim Thompson
tim@etacarinae.jpl.nasa.gov
Youth Liaison Brian Mok
Youth@laas.org
Bulletin Editor.....David Nakamoto
BulletinEditor@laas.org
Bulletin Printer..... Richard Roosman
Web Site Manager Jim McGee
admin@laas.org
Contributing Authors... Tim Thompson
Don DeGregori
David Sovereign



**Editor's
Message**

The July public star party at Griffith was more interesting than usual, as a thunderstorm crested over Mt Wilson and proceeded into the eastern San Gabriel valley, as I can attest to because there was plenty evidence of precipitation when I got back home. Unfortunately, my new camera was not able to record the spectacular light show, but it was visible to one and all at the observatory, which actually had pretty much a front row seat. It also meant a little nervousness as we wondered if the storm was coming in our direction. But while the storm stayed away, the clouds didn't, and many packed it in by nine or so.

The most interesting telescope on the field was not a telescope, but a pair of binoculars, very large and very heavy binoculars, 60 pounds if an ounce, on a very large, heavy mount, and with 130 pounds of counter-weight. For a view of this behemoth, see page 8.

My thanks to all who have contributed to the success of the bulletin. Please consider writing or submit images. Please keep articles to 1,500 words or less. For images, submit only a few well-chosen images, with captions if possible. The deadline for submitting bulletin material is the 10th of each month. Please if possible submit electronically to

BulletinEditor@laas.org

(Continued on page 3)

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. ✧

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

Mt Wilson 60" Nights

LAAS has arranged for two full nights at the Mount Wilson 60-inch telescope this year.

August 29th, Friday, full night
September 26th, 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 \$75 per person for the full night (no half night reservations on a full-night outing). 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 Shapely and Hubble will add to your appreciation of their contributions.

The scope will belong to LAAS all night. 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 or by mail at P.O. Box 56084, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413. ✧

Increased LAAS Membership Dues

Last year, the LAAS spent about \$5000 more than it gained from its various income sources, and a similar deficit in is projected for 2008. Due to this, the governing board has made a decision to increase some of the dues.

(Continued on page 5)

Effective in May 2008, the dues for membership in the LAAS will be increased to \$45.00 a year for regular members, \$30.00 a year for senior members ages 65 and over, \$40.00 a year for senior family members, and \$60 a year for family memberships. In addition, members who require that printed copies of the bulletin be mailed to them, rather than access it from our website, will be charged an additional \$15.00 a year to cover the costs for that service. Youth memberships will remain at \$20.00 a year, and there are no changes in our fees for star members.

As before, the benefits of regular and family memberships include subscriptions to the *Griffith Observer*. Other members may obtain a subscription to that publication through the LAAS for \$15.00 a year. All LAAS members still have the opportunity to subscribe to the magazines *Astronomy* and *Sky and Telescope* at our reduced club rates, currently more than 20% below the regular subscription rates for both publications, and amounting to less than 50% of the prices for individual issues at the newsstand. ✧

The 60-inch telescope at Mt. Wilson Observatory is the first of the modern astronomical telescopes. In December of this year it will celebrate its 100th birthday. This historically significant telescope still works and it is still 60 inches in aperture. LAAS has rented time on this telescope for its members, who are in turn charged only the cost per person required to offset the cost. This is the largest telescope you are ever likely to look through by eye, and it provides really excellent views of planetary nebulae, globular clusters, double stars, some galaxies and other objects. Currently LAAS has time at the 60-inch on August 29 & September 26. Anyone interested in this activity should contact LAAS treasurer Herb Kraus (treasurer@laas.org).





Images of the 60 and 100 inch provided by Don Nicholson, President Emeritus of MWOA.

LAAS President Emeritus & board member Tim Thompson is currently the President of the Mt. Wilson Observatory Association (MWOA), a volunteer support organization for Mt. Wilson Observatory (MWO). In anticipation of a significant increase in activity of the Mt. Wilson Institute (MWI), which operates Mt. Wilson Observatory, MWOA will be looking for people to train as docents, tour guides and session directors. Anyone interested in taking part in the volunteer program at MWO is encouraged to contact Tim Thompson (timthompson3@verizon.net). Volunteers will be obliged to join MWOA, will be cooperatively trained by MWOA & MWI, and subject to approval by MWI. This is a potentially significant opportunity for anyone wishing to become involved in one of the world's leading centers in the history & current events in astronomy.

This Month in the Sky

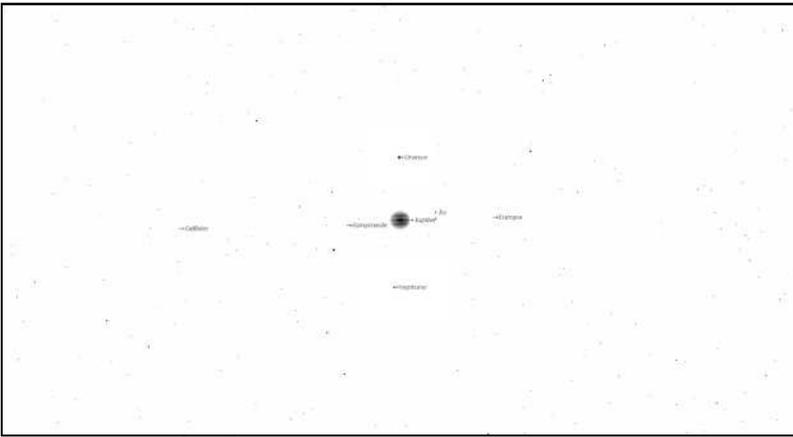
By David Nakamoto

I covered Jupiter last month. In August Jupiter rises even higher earlier, but it will never reach Zenith. That's because it's in the lower half of the ecliptic and well below the celestial equator. For Northern observers this Jupiter season will be more difficult than other years.

Two other outer planets are coming into the night sky, Neptune and Uranus. But they're very small targets. The image shows a $1/2^\circ$ field of view. Jupiter still shows some details, and of course the Galilean satellites are always visible if they're not behind the planet. But while Uranus and Neptune are both twice as large as any of the Galilean satellites, this still makes them small targets, as you can see in the image.

There are plenty of sources to help the amateur find these two, so I won't go into that here. Sky and Telescope, Astronomy magazine, and others are good sources

(Continued on page 7)



for finding the current position of these two. For some time to come, it'll be easy, since both are entering into star fields that are more devoid of stars than the confines of the Milky Way.

A few hints when trying to find either of these planets. Even through binoculars, neither of these two will twinkle on those nights when the stars do. And both have a strange hue to them, an off-bluish or greenish color, that no star has. In short, they don't have the appearance of stars, and that tips one off.

They both present very few details to see through a telescope, and those details are harder to see than on Jupiter or even Saturn. They're no differences of color per se, but shades of the same color, greenish for Uranus, and a sort of greenish blue for Neptune. Even using CCD cameras, heavy image processing is needed to bring any features out. The problem is due to small size and low contrast features. Down through the years many visual observers, both amateur and professional, have reported seeing faint, hard to discern markings on both planets, but since they features varied from observation to observation, no one believed in them.

To see anything at all, the first thing you'll need is magnification, as much as the sky conditions and the optics allow. As a general rule of thumb, 20x to 30x per inch of aperture is about all you can get away with most nights through most scopes. Medium to high quality refractors give the best images for their apertures, followed by long focal ratio (f/8 or more) Newtonians, classical Cassegrains, and Maksutovs. For the high quality refractors, you can push up to 80x to 90x per inch of aperture on nights of very steady seeing. You'll need it. Look again at the image for this article. This is the typical view for about a 25mm eyepiece with a 8 to 10 inch telescope with a focal ratio of around 8 to 10. You'll need about 10 times this magnification to start seeing any significant disk. This would push the field of view to 3 arc-minutes. Neptune and Uranus are less than 3 arc-seconds wide, 60 times smaller than this. So you'll need to push the

(Continued on page 8)

magnification up by 20 times or so. You can get a longer focal length telescope, either by pushing the f -ratio higher, the aperture wider, or both, and push the eyepieces smaller. A good way is to use a short Barlow lens. One trick is to put a star diagonal between the Barlow and the eyepiece, which will make a 2x Barlow to 3x or more. As one can imagine, there are limitations to how large a telescope you can get, and how short an eyepiece you can obtain.

Even with CCD web cameras, there are limitations. One is that as the magnification goes up, the need for steady tracking becomes paramount, even with web video. Even with the wonders that computers can do with image processing, taking good initial data is vital, so good tracking is a must.

Perhaps it's just the satisfaction that one is looking at the borderland of Sol, as Larry Niven once wrote. These two are still the largest and most distant planets in the Solar System. Compared to them, Pluto really is a minor planet, so perhaps its recent reclassification is justified. ✧



At the July public star party, Jeff showed up with these 60-pound binoculars. Obviously impressive, obviously heavy, and obviously a crowd pleaser. I kept wondering how he transported that thing to the site. The mount is a parallelogram type, which allows the binoculars to keep pointing at an object, or rather a point in the sky, and then you can adjust the height for easy viewing without changing the direction the binoculars are pointed.

As the evening progressed, thunderclouds beyond Mt Wilson provided a spectacular sight, first with sunset colors painted over them as the rest of LA went into darkness, and then after sunset they treated everyone at Griffith to a spectacular lightning show, which started off beyond Wilson, then over it, then down into the San Gabriel valley. The clouds strayed over Griffith, but no rain or lightning came our way.

Images courtesy of David Nakamoto.



Equipment for Sale

Meade AR-5 LXD55..... \$550.00

OTA

German Equatorial Mount

#930 diagonal mirror

Autostar control

Standard tripod

Standard finder scope

Ten pound balance weight

Manual

Original box w/foam

Meade Super Plossl eyepieces,
multicoated \$140.00

6.4 mm 1.25 in

9.4 mm 1.25 in

12.4 mm 1.25 in

15 mm 1.25 in

20 mm 1.25 in

26 mm 1.25 in

32 mm 1.25 in

40 mm 1.25 in

56 mm 2 in

Meade Nebula filter #908N (1.25 in.)
.....\$89.00

Meade Nebula filter #910B (2 in)
.....\$119.00

Meade Plossl 9mm Illuminated reticle,
wireless\$77.00

Meade Electronic Eyepiece\$70.00

Meade 929 Diagonal Mirror UHTC, 2
in.....\$119.00

Meade #932 45 deg erecting prism
.....\$47.00

Meade 2x Teleneegative Amplifier,
model 140.....\$20.00

Meade #905 Variable Polarizing Filter
.....\$48.00

Meade Universal AC Adapter . \$59.00

Meade Battery Pack (8 D-
cells).....\$0.00
\$1338.00

The scope and peripherals are in
excellent condition - used a half dozen
times. I no longer have space to set up.

If you're interested, contact:

Rick Smith
951-849-7640
Banning, CA

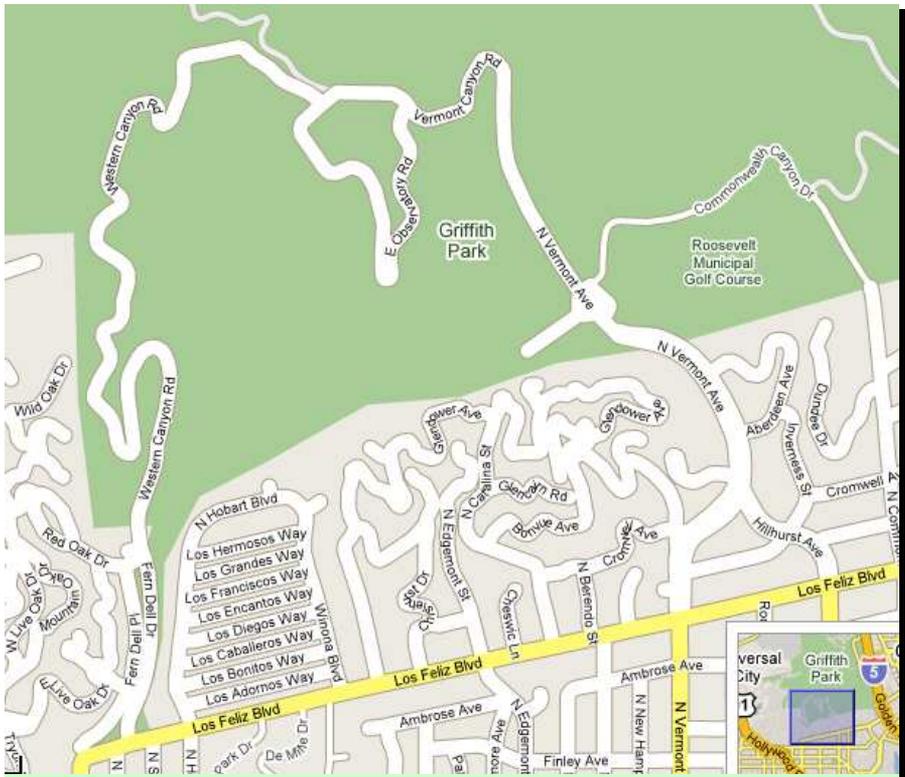


On this and the opposite page, some images from this year's new members star party. On this page we have Reggie Flores and Norm Vargas at left besides Reggie's Meade. Dave Bararu is discussing things astronomical at upper left to an attentive crowd of onlookers. Our own Galileo Guy is thrilling the crowd in the image above, and Don DeGregori is showing off his homebrew telescope below on the opposite page and saying to the prospective telescope maker, "It's easier than it looks!". 😊



Above is a digital drawing done by Jacob Palomarez, a junior member, of the clubhouse at Garvey Ranch Park. Reggie can be seen with his telescope with Jacob himself sitting in his "usual" spot, which is in a tree. Jacob is 10 years old, and currently working on a 6 inch f/7 mirror and reached his 1 year anniversary as a member this past July.





Greek theater events cause closure of Vermont Ave. to through traffic. Please save this map for future reference. I will post it in the bulletin from June to September, and then not for the rest of the year.

Use Ferndale, which changes into Western Canyon Road. Ferndale is about 1 mile further west on Los Feliz than either Hillhurst or Vermont. Ferndale becomes Western Canyon Road once you enter the park. Western Canyon Road is very windy, so drive carefully. You will have to go through the tunnel at the top of the road and turn right onto East Observatory Road. ✧

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 ✧

Don DeGregori

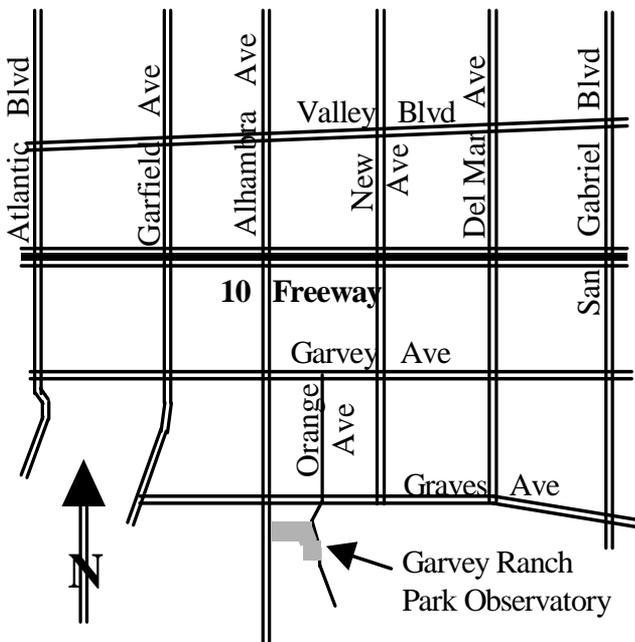
FOR SALE: Vintage Questar 3.5-inch Telescope

Your L.A. Astronomical Society is selling a 1971 standard 3.5-inch Questar (Serial No. 1-CV-4546-BB) that was donated to us by a generous friend. But this telescope is not well suited for use at LAAS' public star parties and other outreach activities or as a loaner scope for our members, and it is too valuable to languish in our shop. It's an excellent instrument that was fully reconditioned this year by Questar Corp. and is in pristine condition. Its premium features include a Cer-Vit mirror for increased reflectivity and broad band coatings to reduce light loss, and it comes with all the standard Questar components and accessories of its era, including two "Erfle" eyepieces (26 mm and 12 mm), an off-axis sun filter, a synchronous drive AC motor, and a cowhide leather carrying case with a luggage cover. It is being offered for sale at \$2,300. Contact the LAAS treasurer at treasurer@laas.org or by mail at P.O. Box 56084, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413.



Map to Monterey Park Observatory

(The place to build your telescope)



LOANER CORNER



It might not look like it, but the spring and summer star parties are just around the corner. 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-4

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-2

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. ✧

David Sovereign



EVENTS CALENDAR

Date	Event	Location and Information
Aug 2nd (Sat)	Dark Sky Night	Lockwood Valley
Aug 9th (Sat)	Public Star Party	Griffith Observatory. See pg 3 for details on how to attend.
Aug 11th (Mon)	General Mtg	Griffith Observatory Dr Harold Yorke, topic is Star Formation.
Aug 29th (Fri)	Mt Wilson Night	Mt Wilson (see page 5)
Aug 30th (Sat)	Dark Sky Night	Lockwood Valley
Sep 6th (Sat)	Public Star Party	Griffith Observatory. See pg 3 for details on how to attend.
Sep 8th (Mon)	General Mtg	Griffith Observatory Speaker to be announced.
Sep 27th (Sat)	Dark Sky Night	Lockwood Valley

The board meeting is held at 8pm on the Wednesday night prior to the general meeting, at Garvey Ranch Park. The Monday general meetings start at 7:30 pm unless otherwise noted. See each month's bulletin for updates.



LAAS Home Page: <http://www.laas.org>
 LAAS Bulletin Online: 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. ✧

New Members Corner

Welcome to the Los Angeles Astronomical Society! Right now, we have lost our previous New Members Coordinator to college, so we're looking for someone to take over this position. If you're interested, please contact one of the board members on page 2. ✧

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