



## The Mason - Dixon Astronomer

Westminster Astronomical Society of Maryland

September 1986, Vol. 3 No. 9



### Convention Video Highlights at September 24 Meeting

Videotaped highlights of August's Astronomical League ALCON86 convention held in Baltimore shall be viewed at the September 24 meeting of the Westminster Astronomical Society, at 7:30 p.m., in Rm. 111 of the Lewis Hall of Science, on the Western Maryland College Campus in Westminster.

Of major interest will be the press conference where Dr. Riccardo Giacconi of the Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore announced that amateurs will be given a crack at observing with the Hubble Space telescope, scheduled for launch in 1988. See the news notes columns in the September Sky and Telescope and October Astronomy magazines for a brief report.

Amateurs may obtain a packet containing guidelines for preparing a proposal for the Hubble Space Telescope. Send \$1 to HST Amateur Astronomers Working Group, c/o A.A.V.S.O., 25 Birch Street, Cambridge, MA 02138.

If time permits, one or two of the half-hour talks will be shown. One of these will be a paper presented by a controversial individual who you will have to hear for yourself.

### WAS Welcome Wagon

We have a new out-of-state member, Jim Brown of Newport, New Hampshire. Jim received a gift membership from Blaine Roelke, who visits him once a year while up at the Stellafane convention in Vermont.

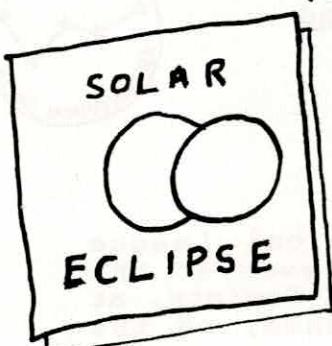
Micki Killoran has moved to New Mexico in search of deep dark skies. Her new address is Box 149 Tohatchi, NM 87325-0149.

Here is a very special announcement. On October 11, WAS will lose two single members, but gain a new family membership. Society members Blaine Roelke and Nancy Raab are being joined in marriage that day. We extend congratulations to them and wish them a long and happy life together!

### President's Report

We are finally getting some clearer weather as we pass the Vernal Equinox. I had my annual cleaning of the optics just in time for some recent clear weather. The combination of weather and dust-free mirrors and lenses allowed me to see things I was never able to see before with my 12.5" telescope and binoculars, such as the California Nebula, The black eagle nebula in M16, and at least four hydrogen knots in the galaxy M33 in Triangulum. Those who came to the August star party at Dave Pessagno's home enjoyed the nice views his 17.5" Odyssey gives of the Messier objects. At the September star party, Mike Scalion gave an interesting demonstration, using his 10" reflector, of how a

CURT ROELLE  
3481 Salem Bottom Rd.  
Westminster, MD 21157  
848-6384



Taneytown

WESTMINSTER

RT. 140

MAIN ST.  
RT. 32

GULF SAFeway

Reisterstown

RT 32 — RT 97

Hook  
Road

OLD  
WASHINGTON  
Rd.

SHORT  
LANE  
Rd.

MD 27  
RIDGE ROAD

NICODEMUS RD

3481

EXXON

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WINFIELD

flashing

BP

LEGEND:

- [square] Gas station or other landmark
- [square with diagonal line] Traffic signal
- [circle] City or town
- [cross] STAR PARTY!

MT. AIRY

MD 27  
EXIT

I-70

MD 94  
exit

WOODBINE  
RD  
MD 94

WOODBINE

SYKESVILLE

Baltimore

MD 97  
exit

MD 32  
exit

Baltimore

STAR PARTY  
DATE: Fri Oct 3  
TIME: 1:00 P.M. -  
5:00 P.M.

nebula filter can help one view the Helix Nebula. If the names of these objects are not familiar to you, then you have not been to a star party recently!

This month Steve Rice begins a new column, "The Eagle Eye Observer", as our newly appointed Observing Chairman. He is also coordinating a special interest group whose goal is to observe all of the Messier objects. Who said the Director at Large had nothing to do? Our former observing chairman Mike Potter will continue to privately publish his observing newsletter, the "Star Farmer's Almanac", free when you supply him with self-addressed-stamped-envelopes. His address is 2809 St. Paul Street, Baltimore, MD 21218.

I hope that some of you will play hookey with me on October 3 to view the partial eclipse. Until then, I hope to see you at the meeting this month.

-- Curt Roelle

#### Astronomy Subscriptions Due Soon

Treasurer Joe Pekala reports that the 1987 subscription fees for members who are receiving Astronomy magazine through WAS will be due soon, probably in October, so put aside a few extra dollars. This is a good time for those who do not get Astronomy magazine to get it at a good discount. The offer is also good for those who have a current subscription but would like to extend it. Currently, members are receiving Astronomy for \$12/year sent to their homes.

#### October Star Parties

Early October is bursting with star parties beginning on the afternoon of October 3. Curt Roelle invites persons to watch our primary star become partially eclipsed by the moon at his home between 1:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m., October 3. From Maryland, about 60% of the sun will be covered by the lunar disc. The address is 3481 Salem Bottom Road, south of Westminster. A map is enclosed.

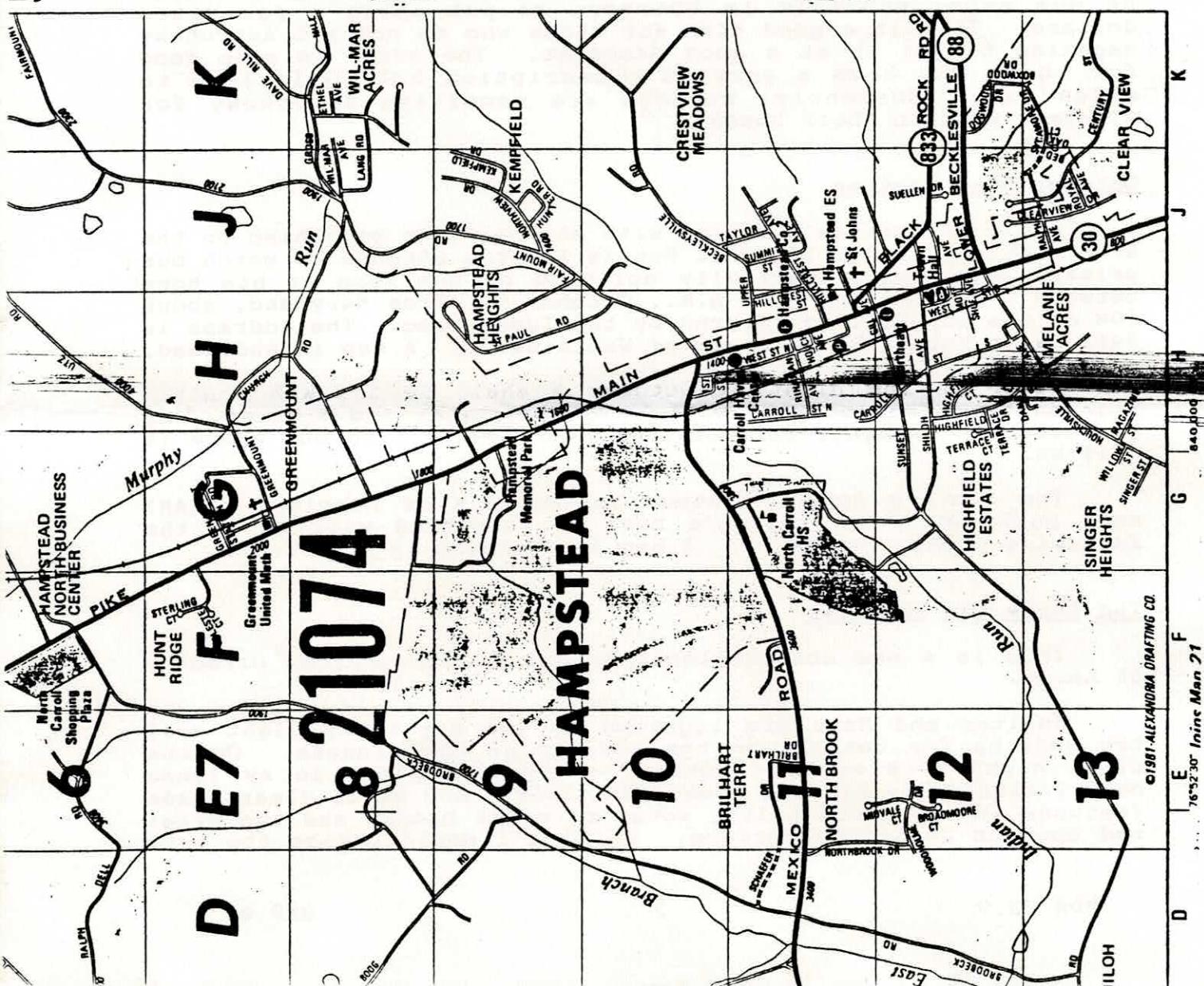
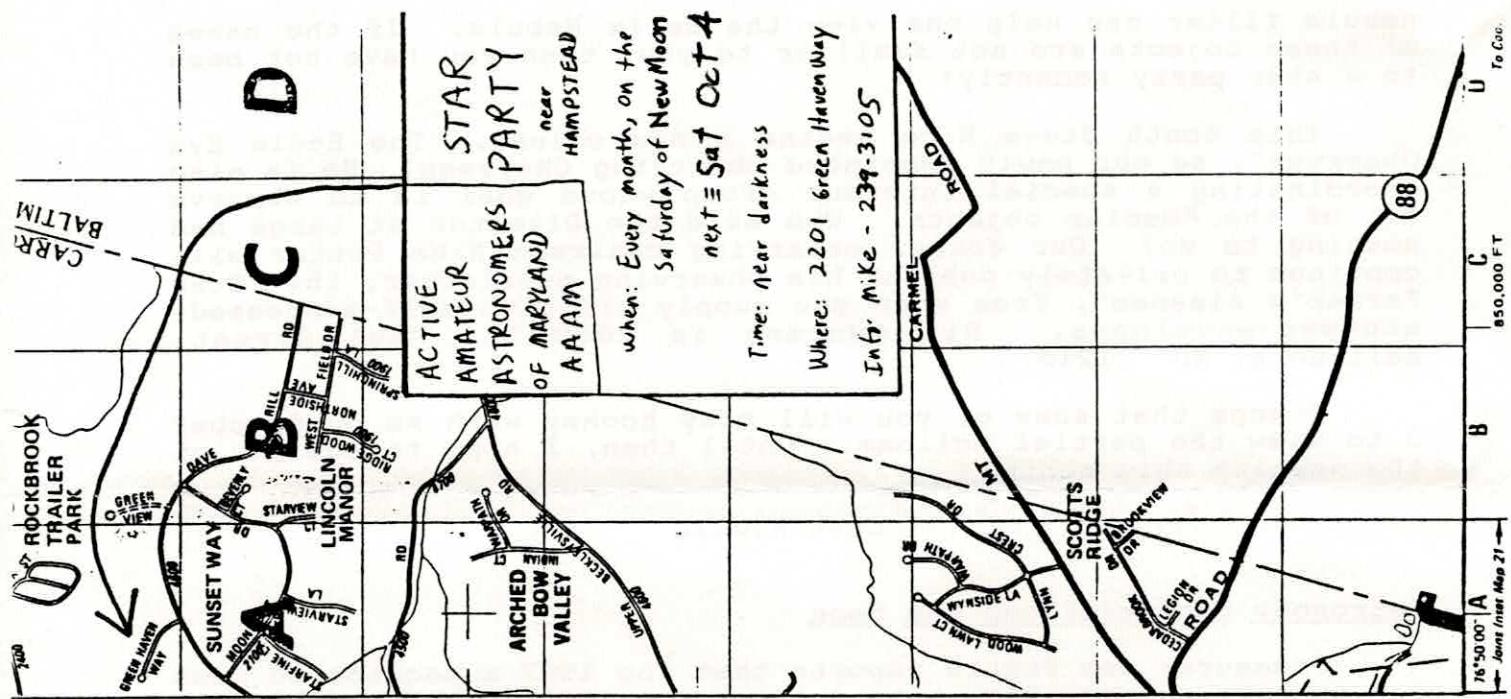
Later on the night of October 3 shall be the WAS monthly star party. The location will be announced at the meeting. If you miss the meeting, call Curt at 848-6384 to find out where it will be.

The monthly Active Amateur Astronomers of Maryland (AAAM) star party at Mike Scalion's home in Hampstead will be on the following night, October 4. A map is included in this issue.

#### The Eagle Eye Observer

This is a new observational column by Steve Rice, Director at Large.

Jupiter and Mars are lighting up the night sky right now; try looking for details on the surface of the planets. On one clear night this month I could use every eyepiece in my lens case including my highest power 7mm (286x), and still clearly see festoons in the cloud belts, seven or eight bands, and the great red spot on Jupiter's surface. On Mars I could notice the mare



[pronounced marr-aay] and green or grayish colors around the polar caps (white in color)

I should note here that I am using an 8-inch F/10 Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope with a focal length of 2000 mm that I think is fairly good for the planets. Last month while observing with Curt Roelle in his backyard I discovered that my collimation was off. After recollimating my telescope, it sharpened the images and made it perform even better than before. When was the last time you checked the collimation of your telescope?

In other news this month, Curt Roelle and Blaine Roelke observed an Aurora Borealis at around 1:00 a.m. on the morning of September 12, which I didn't get to see unfortunately.

I would like to mention that I am recording my observations of the Messier objects. For your information the Astronomical League offers special recognition in the form of a Messier Club certificate for those who have observed 70 objects listed in their publication A Guide to the Messier Objects. Your written observational record must be examined by a Society officer who then submits a letter of recommendation to the League. Observation of the remaining 40 or so objects and submission of a second letter results in endorsement of your certificate for Honorary membership.

Last but not least, try viewing the solar eclipse on October 3; this will be a partial eclipse and should be pretty exciting. Make sure to use a projection screen rather than viewing it directly or your eyes could become permanently damaged. Check the September Sky and Telescope and October Astronomy for details. (Steve Rice -- Observing Chairman)

#### August Meeting Summary

At the August 27th meeting of the Westminster Astronomical Society, the guest speaker was Dr. John Pearl. Dr. Pearl, of the NASA-Goddard Space Flight Center, is involved with the Voyager program, and most recently the flyby of Uranus.

Because of the velocity of the spacecraft relative to the target, and the dimness of the sun at the distance of Uranus, Voyager was commanded to rotate while photographing the Uranus system. The first closeup photographs of the moons were very different from what was expected, especially Miranda which appears to have been shattered and then reformed.

Dr. Pearl also showed a 16mm movie of the planned August, 1989 Neptune flyby, illustrating the flight path of Voyager as it grazes the atmosphere of Neptune and is then tossed out of the solar system forever. (Andy Demario Jr. -- Secretary)

"The Voyager 2 Flyby of Uranus" is available for loan to WAS members on VHS format videotape. Call Curt (848-6384) for information.

WAS CALENDAR

September 24 7:30 p.m. Meeting -- Rm. 111 Western Md. College  
October 03 1:00 p.m. Solar Eclipse Party -- C. Roelle's  
03 dusk Star Party -- location to be announced  
04 dusk Star Party -- M. Scalion's, Hampstead

Announcement:

Carole Sakamoto has an unclaimed door prize that she won at the Astrocon86 banquet. Carole may pick up her prize at this month's meeting.

Westminster Astronomical Society

3481 Salem Bottom Road  
Westminster, Maryland 21157



USA 22

Curt & Cheryl Roelle F-11/86  
3481 Salem Bottom Road  
Westminster, MD 21157