

WESTMINSTER ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY
of Carroll County, Maryland

Newsletter for December 1985, Vol 2 No 12

"Halley's Comet for Christmas" Public Star Party

The Westminster Astronomical Society, in cooperation with the Carroll County Parks & Recreation Department, shall present Halley's Comet to the public, on Saturday December 14. Lake Hashawa, north of Westminster, is the site of the star party. A map is enclosed with this issue. The club will have several telescopes set up to show the comet and other interesting celestial objects to the public and other club members that come. The more telescopes there are, the more objects we can observe simultaneously. A slide program shall also be presented on Halley's comet. We need volunteers to help fill these positions:

TELESCOPE OPERATORS (TO): Four to six telescopes shall be available for observing. One TO shall be required to man each instrument. The TO shall maintain the alignment of the telescope on the given object. The TO shall answer questions about the object being observed, or about his telescope. The TO should bring his own instrument or borrow one.

AUDIO VISUAL TECHNICIAN (AV Tech): Two AV Techs shall be needed to run the slide projector and tape recorder. The program soundtrack is on cassette and will need to be rewound between shows. The slide projector must be advanced manually. Although a one-man job, two are needed so that the equipment is never left unattended. The slide show will be reprinted several times during the evening.

USHERS: The ushers shall help guests find their way safely from the building in which they watch the slide show, to the location a short distance away where they will be able to view Halley's Comet. The ushers shall be armed with flashlights, preferably red light, to help preserve night vision. (Several layers of red cellophane may be attached to the flashlight with a rubber band.) Two to four ushers are needed.

It is not known how many people shall come to view the comet, although the number can be considerable. We need a good turnout of volunteers for several reasons. Some of the visitors may be interested in joining WAS, and it is important for them to know that we enjoy what we do and that we have fun doing it. If we make a favorable impression on the Parks Department, we may be asked to return periodically (e.g. twice a year) and support public viewing sessions. Perhaps we may be able to have some of our club star parties in state-owned areas.

If you have any questions, or wish to volunteer for any of the above mentioned positions, or have thought of something else you can do (such as making signs), call either Eugene Sterner (346-7725) or Curt Roelle (848-6384). Please volunteer even if it is only for an hour or so. Even if you cannot volunteer to help, come anyway. This may be your best and only chance to see Halley's Comet until 2061.

The public observing begins at 7:00 p.m. and ends at 11:00 p.m. Members are asked to come no later than 6:00 so that we can

get the projector/screen and telescopes set up. Hopefully, the club can watch the slide show once together before the public begins arriving.

WAS Welcome Wagon

WAS has five new memberships on the books. This success can probably be shared between the Fall Astronomy Day in October, and the recent fame of Halley's Comet. The Westminster Astronomical Society welcomes aboard the following new members: Don Thatcher, Andrew Blumberg, Nancy Raab, Jim Bittle, and Ray and Sharleen Sterner.

President's Report

We can all feel Halley in the air. Members have reported being bombarded with questions from friends and strangers. My weekends are booked with star parties and the promise to present Halley's to small groups. Personal friends from the Washington and Baltimore areas shall be coming out on weeknights for their turn to feast their eyes on the travelling show. Some folks who have remembered that old telescope in the garage or attic, either inherited or purchased at a yard sale for \$10, are dropping them off hoping that minor adjustments can repair years of neglect, dust, and cobwebs. The phone has rang late at night with people asking "I got your number from (blank)...can you tell me where I can find Halley's Comet?"

Public interest is peaking and WAS must be prepared to deal with the demand for information and observing opportunities. Whether you want it or not, if you own a telescope, you will have many of your curious friends calling you up for a look. To help centralize some of this interest, WAS and Carroll County shall hold a public star party on Saturday, December 14, from 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. Please read the details at the beginning of this newsletter if you have not already. We need everyone's help.

The 1986 convention of the Astronomical League will be held in Baltimore during August. WAS members shall shortly be League members, and several are active in the planning and preparation of the convention. The aggressive Mike Potter is the Convention Chairman.

In other news the Hatter Planetarium in Gettysburg will have a Christmas program on Sunday, December 15. Elsewhere in the Newsletter are details on where and when to meet.

Since Western Maryland College is closed, there shall be no December meeting. Please plan to come to the "Comet for Christmas" star party on the 14th instead, and the Hatter Planetarium Christmas program on the 15th. I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Curtis W. Roelle

1986 Astronomical League National Convention in Baltimore

Every year the Astronomical League (A.L.) holds a National Convention in a city which plays host to hundreds of guests from around the country. It is a very ambitious undertaking and few

clubs ever actually host a national convention. The Baltimore Astronomical Society (BAS) has offered to host the 1986 national convention, AstroCon 86, which will run from August 5-10. The convention shall be held at the College of Notre Dame. The early attendees will be able to go on tours of the National Air and Space Museum, NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, or observe with the historic 26" refractor at the U.S. Naval Observatory. The bulk of the convention will feature papers and other programs by noted amateur as well as professional astronomers.

As an added bonus, the Space Telescope is scheduled to be launched by the Space Shuttle during the convention. Since the Space Telescope Science Institute is in Baltimore, this should be one of the highlights of the convention. The Institute, located at the Johns Hopkins Campus, had planned to help underwrite the convention. Unfortunately, the Institute's agreement with the Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy (AURA) prohibits such ventures, and the convention was forced to move to Notre Dame. Notre Dame appears to be very satisfactory in meeting the needs of the convention. The Institute however, remains a major focal point of the convention.

WAS Observing Chairman and BAS member Mike Potter has assumed the awesome role of Convention Chairman. Mike writes the Observational Astronomy newsletter which is available free to WAS members, and was also the prime builder of the 17.5" telescope at Key Observatory. Several other organizations are planning to participate. These organizations are:

L-5 Society
Planetary Society
Space Studies Institute
Young Astronauts Program
Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers (ALPO)
International Amateur Professional Photoelectric Photometry
(IAPPP)
International Occultation Timing Association (IOTA)

At least one major speaker shall lecture each day papers are presented at the convention. Booths shall be set up for amateur as well as commercial displays, which may include space art sales. There shall be a Saturday night banquet as well as a reception at the Maryland Science Center, located at Baltimore's Inner Harbor.

WAS shall be joining the League at the end of this year. Several WAS members who are also members of BAS are on the Planning Committee. If you would like to help in the planning of AstroCon 86, please indicate your interest by calling one of the WAS members on the Planning Committee. This is your Astronomical League, and AstroCon 86 may be the best chance you may ever have to see one up close and to be directly involved. WAS Planning Committee members, and their areas of responsibility are:

Mike Potter	Convention Chairman Major Address (speaker) Coordinator
Blaine Roelke	Audio-Visual Chairperson Coordinator for Non-League Groups

Dave Pessagno	Astronomical League Coordinator Astro Mart '86 Chairperson Transportation Committee Field Trips Publicity
Barry Willen	Program Committee Member Publicity
Curtis Roelle	Proceedings Chairperson Convention Photographer

Each of the above individuals would welcome help from others. There are many duties not mentioned above. More information shall appear in future newsletters as it develops.

New Season at Hatter Planetarium in Gettysburg

Blaine Roelke has received the 1986 schedule of the Hatter Planetarium, located on the campus of Gettysburg College. All shows are presented on Sundays and are shown twice a day, at 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. The first program, "Special Starlight -- Annual Christmas Program", shall be on Sunday, December 15. WAS members who are interested will meet in the parking lot behind Lewis Hall at 12:00 p.m. Those who come shall carpool for the 45 minute drive, and will arrive for the 1:00 p.m. show. The show lasts about 45 minutes.

These are the scheduled programs for 1986:

January 26	Off On A Comet
February 23	The Solar System Today
March 23	Galaxies and the Universe
April 20	Life In the Universe

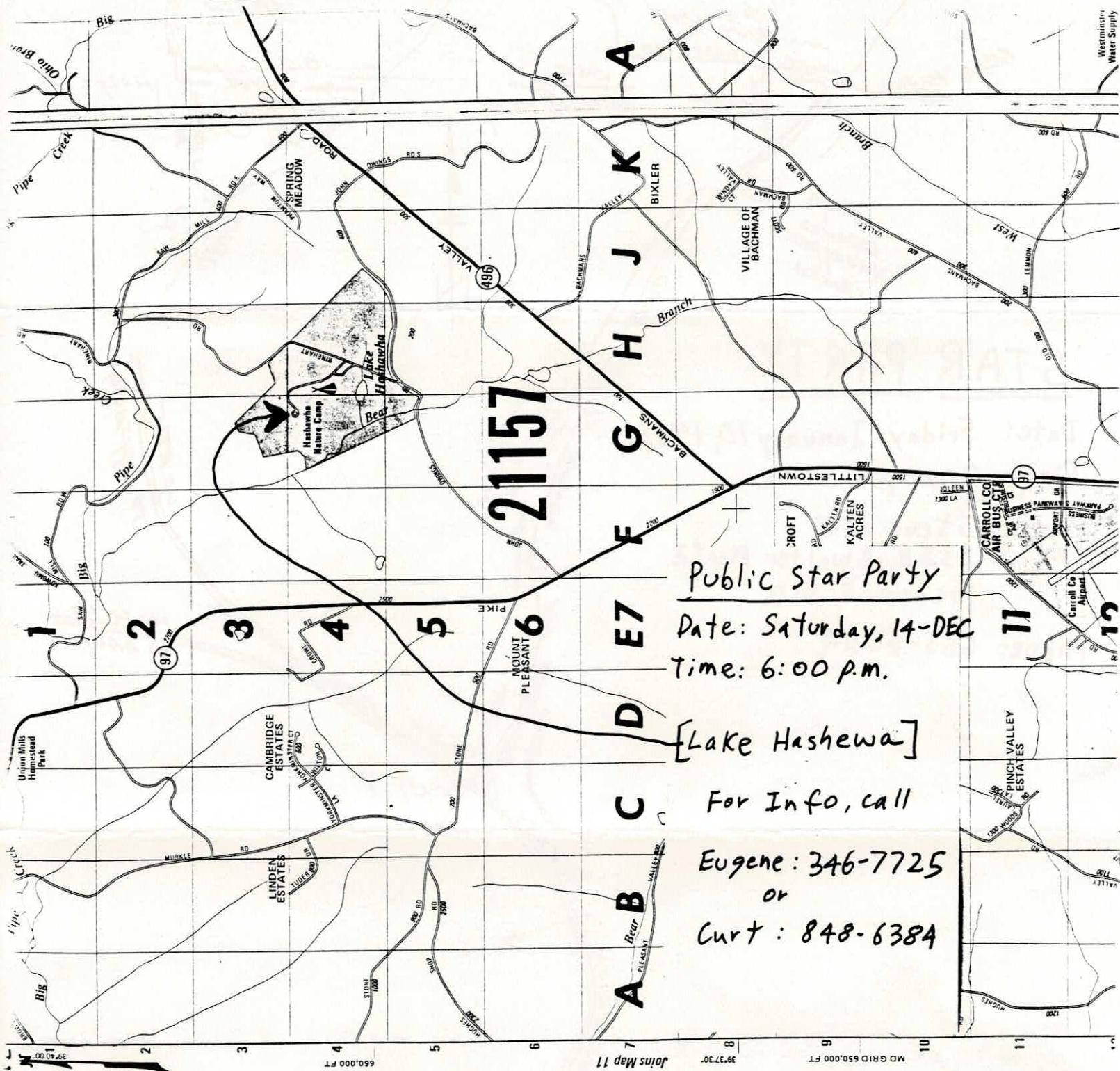
December Star Party

Following the "Comet for Christmas" public star party at Lake Hassawa, volunteers are invited to a club star party at Mike Scalion's. Mike is also a member of the Active Amateur Astronomers of Maryland (AAAM), and all WAS members are encouraged to join. Mike's Hampstead address is 2201 Green Haven Way, phone 239-3105. A map may be found in the November newsletter.

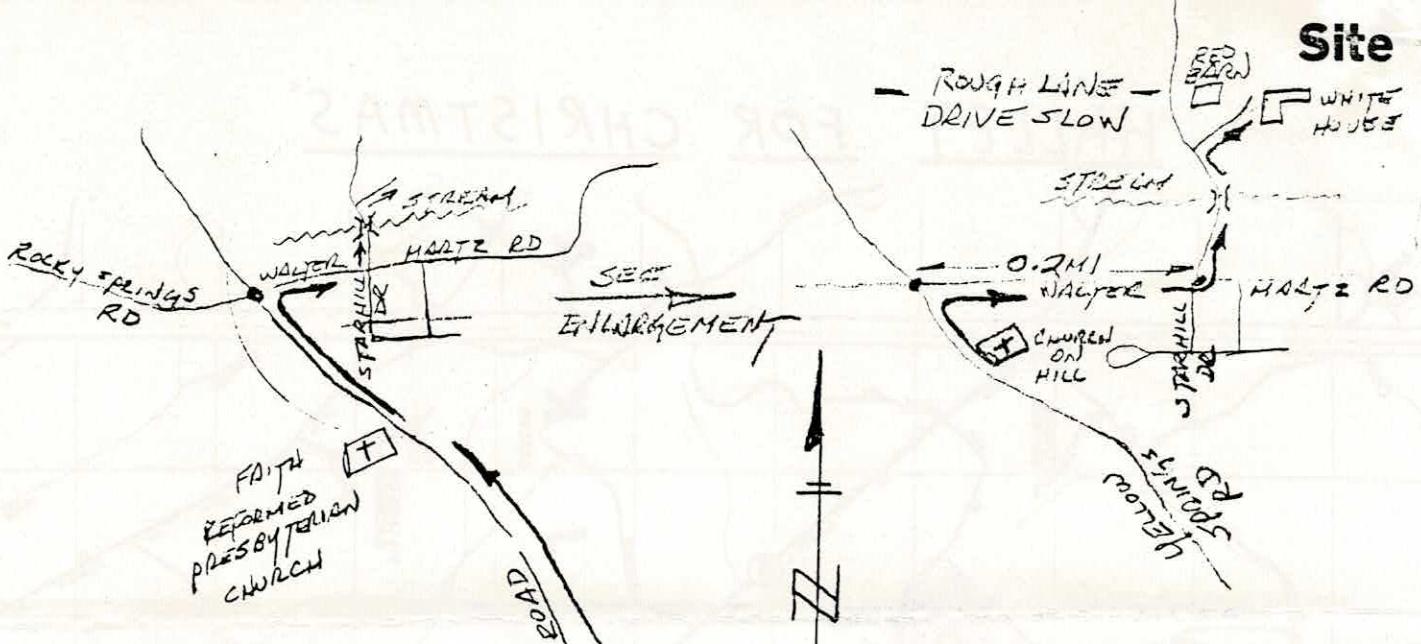
January Star Party

The January star party shall be held at Steve Rice's farm in Frederick on the day of New Moon, Friday January 10. Steve's address is 8328 A. Walter Martz Road, phone 663-6054. Halley's Comet will set about 8:00, so get there around 6:30 to see it. A map is enclosed with this issue.

"HALLEY FOR CHRISTMAS"



Site



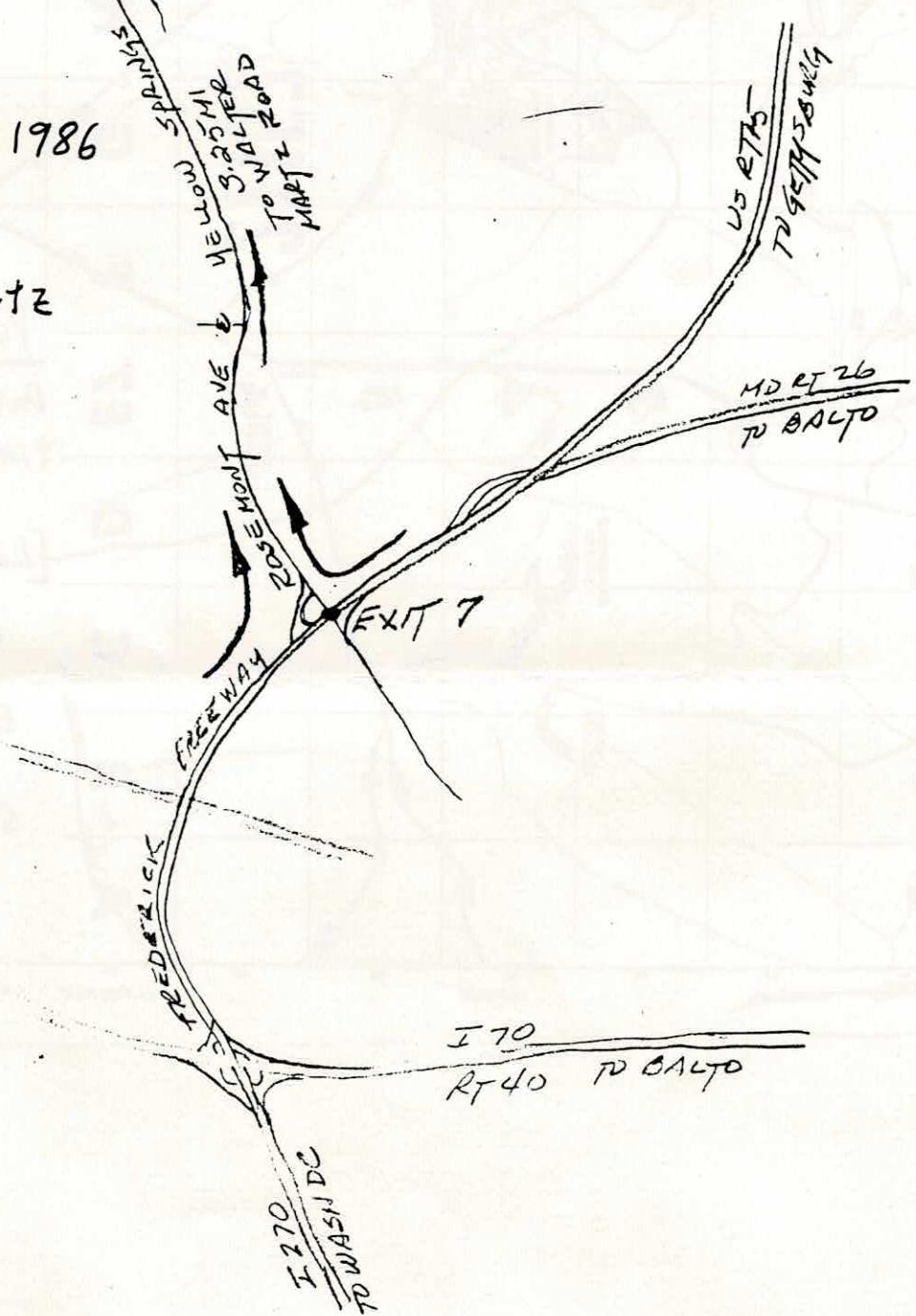
STAR PARTY

Date: Friday, January 10, 1986

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Place: Steve Rice
8328 A Walter Martz
Frederick, MD

Phone: 663-6054



Observational Astronomy Newsletter

Those who have been members of WAS for several months are familiar with our other "newsletter", Observation Astronomy, written by Mike Potter, the Observing Chairman. OA is a summary of interesting phenomena of interest to members produced periodically, and available free for the asking, courtesy of Mike. In OA-4, Mike announced that only those that provide him with self-addressed-stamped-envelopes (SASE) shall receive OA by mail in the future. However, it shall be made available at the club meetings. The best way to ensure receiving OA on time is mail a stack of SASE's to:

Mike Potter, 2809 St. Paul St., Baltimore, MD 21218

Nominations For Office

Nominations are still open for club office. Any member in good standing is eligible for any of the five offices. The offices are President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and Director at Large. To seek election, nominate someone, or obtain more information, call any of the following members of the nominating committee:

Pres	Curt Roelle	848-6384
VPres	Todd Bonner	848-7839
Sec'y	Tom Prall	374-6503
Treas	Blaine Roelke	756-2886
Dir	Tom Appler	239-8070

WAS Programs Available on Video Tape

Starting with the December 4 meeting, selected programs presented at the monthly meetings will be recorded on video tape (VHS format). If you miss one of the meetings, arrangements can be made to borrow the program tape. Lectures by speakers from outside the club are primary candidates for video archiving. Arrangements to borrow the December tape, featuring Fred Espenak's solar eclipse program, may be made by contacting Curt Roelle.

Thanks to Lab Assistants

WAS appreciates the help of those who helped with the weekly astronomy lab sessions at Western Maryland College.

WAS CALENDAR

December 14 6:00 p.m. Public Star Party - Lake Hashawa

14 dusk Star Party - Mike Scalion

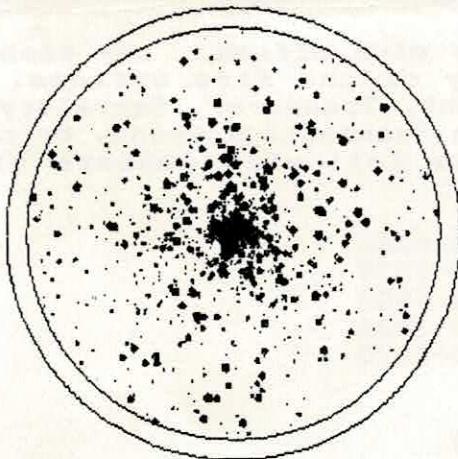
15 12:00 p.m. Gettysburg Planetarium - meet at WMC

January 10 dusk Star Party - Steve Rice

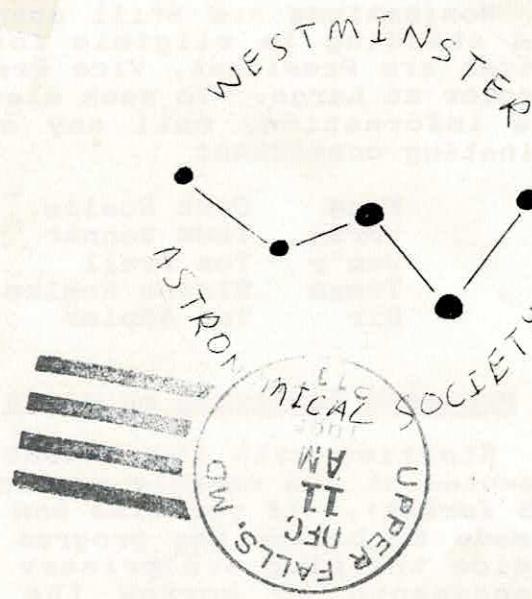
WAS T-Shirts & Logo Contest Continues

This month we present the first received WAS Logo contest entries. A winner will be selected at the January 29 business meeting, and entries may be submitted up till then. Entries mailed to this newsletter before January 15 shall be printed in the January Newsletter. You may send as many entries as you like.

Entry #1



Entry #2



Westminster Astronomical Society

Westminster Astronomical Society

3481 Salem Bottom Road
Westminster, Maryland 21157



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