

FIRST LIGHT



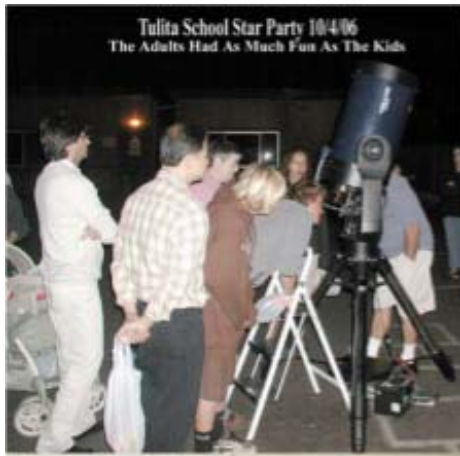
Journal of the South Bay Astronomical Society – November 2006
on line at www.geocities.com/sbas_elcamino

Monthly General Meeting: Friday, November, 3rd, 7:30 PM

State of the Club Presentations

“ELECTIONS!”

The Tulita Elementary School Star Party



Tulita School Star Party 10/4/06
The Adults Had As Much Fun As The Kids



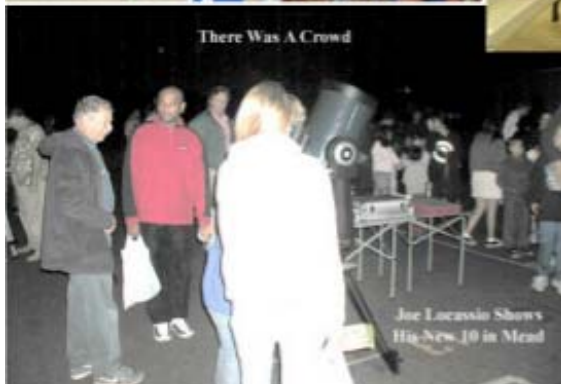
Arnie Shows Sun Spots
Tulita School 10/3/06



Tulita School - 10/3/06
5th grade Class



Joe Explains Star Activity
Tulita School 10/3/06



There Was A Crowd

Joe Lacassin Shows
His New 10 in Mead



Craig Explains

Space week at the Tulita School started on Sept 28 and continued through Oct 4. It began with a visit by an astronaut and continued with talks and displays from representatives of Boeing and Northrup Grumman . SBAS participated by supplying speakers and the grand finale - a giant star party. On Tues Oct 3rd Arnie Stodolsky and I gave an afternoon presentation to a combined 5th grade class of 60 students. I planned to give a talk on the Sun, Eclipses and Seasons, while Arnie manned the scope to view the sun and hopefully sun spots. Unfortunately a giant cloud obscured the sun most of the time and we couldn't see much detail. That wasn't the only problem neither the school's computer nor mine would project an image on the screen though it was displayed in the computer. So we had to improvise. What was supposed to be a slide show became an impromptu question and answer session. And as it turned out one of the most exhilarating and fun experiences I've had in talking to dozens of groups over the years. These kids were really knowledgeable and up on astronomy. They asked questions ranging from Black Holes to the Apocalypse. On Wed night the school went all out. They must have had a dozen or more experiments going on in different rooms all relating somehow to astronomy or space. SBAS represented the astronomy end with talks by Nora De Muth on "How a Telescope Works" using the latest NSN kit. Ron

Rennie showed his video on the Eclipse in Libya, and I Presented "The Scale of The Universe" which used the "Passport to Space" as a tool. The school embellished the NSN Passport and gave free homework passes to those who completed it. Students had to record things they saw thru a scope that are in our solar system, in our galaxy and in the universe beyond. Tulita handed out more than 300 of the passports so that kept our ten scopes very busy. Counting parents and siblings more than 400 people attended this event. WOW! Congratulations to all those SBASers who contributed their time, equipment and knowledge to make this one of the biggest and best events SBAS has ever staged.

- **Joe Fierstein**

The October 7 Meeting

The meeting began at 7:45 as President Ken Rossi called the 45 attendees to order. Two first-time visitors, Harold and Jay, introduced themselves, and Ken welcomed them and all other visitors to the meeting. Various members reported on their recent observations; although nobody reported seeing Comet Swan yet, it will become more visible in the coming weeks. Ken read out a letter sent to us from Tulita Elementary School in Redondo Beach, thanking us for the star party we gave them, and Ken Strausse screened some pictures of the event. President Rossi pointed out that the board elections for our Society are coming up, and nominations would be appreciated.

After a ten-minute social break, President Rossi introduced the guest speaker Mona Delitsky. Mona Delitsky's talk was about "Triton's Ionosphere: Chemistry and Composition". This year marks the 160th anniversary of Triton's discovery by W. Lassell, and Triton remains an object of much research. Two months ago, we were treated to "The Cryogenic World of Triton", a lecture by Dr. Gary Peterson, and this evening's lecture took us to the outer reaches of this satellite. We know that Triton, Neptune's largest moon, has an ionosphere with a density of 40,000 electrons per cubic centimeter, measured from the delay of radio signals as orbiting spacecraft passed behind Triton's disk. But what are the positive ions



**Mona Delitsky Receives Certificate of Appreciation
For Her Talk on Triton's Ionosphere**

that are mixed in with all these electrons? The obvious suspect is nitrogen, because nitrogen dominates Triton's surface and atmosphere. However, Mona Delitsky's modeling of the ionosphere's chemistry has shown a more complicated picture. The nitrogen atoms become ionized, but then form nitrogen ion clusters as the atomsglom onto each other. Several dozen nitrogen atoms may be found in each cluster, and these combine with carbon monoxide (CO) molecules to produce CO⁺ and NO⁺ ions, which also cluster with nitrogen. A further complication occurs above 200

kilometers, as ions interact with free carbon atoms, producing individual C⁺ ions. These mixtures have done a good job of matching the observations taken by spacecraft.

After answering a few questions, Mona Delitsky was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation and an honorarium. The meeting ended at 9:08, and several members stayed to chat and to purchase some of the merchandise that Ms. Delitsky had brought with her.

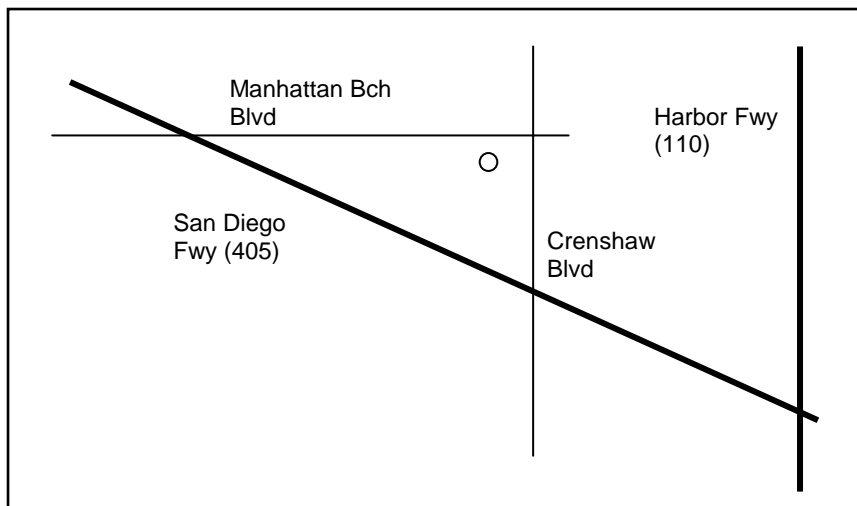
- **Dr. Steven Morris**

SBAS Executive Board

President	Ken Rossi	515-1586	ken_a_rossi@yahoo.com
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Outreach Committee	Joe Fierstein	377-9834	Joefiers@verizon.net



Monthly General Meetings

We normally meet on the first Friday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the Planetarium at El Camino College. If the first Friday is on or close to a holiday, we usually defer the meeting until the second Friday of the month.

The Planetarium is on the south side of Manhattan Beach Blvd., one block west of Crenshaw Blvd. (near the center of the map at left).

The planetarium is the only round, domed building on campus. There is on-street parking, and we can often use campus parking; check inside to see if you need a FREE parking permit for your car.

We enjoy the planetarium facilities through the courtesy of the El Camino College Administration, and have several faculty members of the Astronomy Department as members of our Club. Our meetings always include an informal opening, when new attendees are invited to introduce themselves and let us know about their interests in astronomy. Members share their latest news and observations at this time. The rest of the evening is devoted to guest speakers, who range from amateur astronomers to professional astronomers to representatives from local aerospace companies to college professors. We are fortunate to have all these talented people in our area, willing to come and talk to us.

Monthly Planning Meeting

Committee members (and anyone else with an interest in Society activities) meet each month, usually on the Monday following the general meeting. Meetings are sometimes rescheduled due to travel and other circumstances. Exact date and time of each month's meeting will be announced in the schedule of events in FIRST LIGHT each month, and should also be verified with a committee member. The November 6th planning meeting will be held at 7:30 PM at the home of Ray Grace, 2706 Spreckels Lane in Redondo Beach (310) 370-1913. Take Hawthorne Blvd to 190th St., turn West to Inglewood Ave., then turn North (right) and proceed two blocks to Spreckels Lane and turn Right. If driving South on Inglewood Ave., Spreckels Lane is two blocks south past the light at Ralston Ave., and turn Left, to the 4th house on the right (South side). Parking is available on both sides of the street.

NexStar 8 Available to SBAS Members

All members in good standing (with at least six months of continuous membership) can borrow the club's Nexstar8 for up to 7 days. The fee of \$5 for a weekend, or \$10 for an entire week, is nonrefundable and will be added to the club's Accessories Fund "Wish List" for future purchases. A fully refundable deposit of \$200 cash or check is required. Loss or damage is the responsibility of the borrower. A copy of the complete South Bay Astronomical Society Nexstar 8 Borrowing Rules and Agreement is available upon request. The **Accessories Fund "Wish List"** – Member contributions of any amount or donations will be appreciated, as will any suggestions for new purchases!

SBAS Membership Benefits

Contact Arnie Stodolsky for magazine subscriptions at club rates: "Sky & Telescope" \$32.95 and "Astronomy" \$34.00/1 year or \$60.00/2 years! Make your check payable to SBAS and mail the payment and your subscription / renewal form directly to South Bay Astronomical Society, P.O. Box 1937, Redondo Beach, CA 90278.

Part of your SBAS membership dues goes toward membership in the Astronomical League. All paid members should be receiving the "Reflector", the league's newsletter, four times a year. As a member organization, we can participate in a number of award programs they offer. These are based on completing various observing challenges. Check out the Astronomical League website at www.astroleague.org.

Elections

A year has now passed since the club constitution was ratified and club officers were elected for the very first time. Election time is fast approaching. If you'd like to become more involved in the operation of the club, then please come to the November meeting prepared to help select candidates for the club officers. Nominations and voting will take place at the November meeting with the newly elected officers assuming office in January 2007. At this time, most board members will stand for re-election but please feel free to make nominations. Everyone, please get involved in making the SBAS a truly dynamic society!

Transit of Mercury

On Wednesday, November 8, the planet (yes, it's still a planet) Mercury will transit across the face of the sun. This transit will be visible from the LA area starting at about 11:12 PM and lasting until about 4:00 PM. Joe Fierstein is organizing a public viewing event Hesse Park in Rancho Palos Verdes. Anyone interested in helping out should contact Joe. Also, note that El Camino College will be providing an opportunity for public viewing of the transit at the observatory on top of the Math Building.

Email List for Breaking News

In order to keep the membership updated in a timely fashion of changes/additions to sky party events as well as other news, we are starting an email distribution list. If you would like to be included, please email your name and email address to Arnie Stodolsky at astodols@ix.netcom.com. This will also be announced at the next General Meeting.

Items for Sale



A Visit to the New Griffith Observatory

The Griffith Observatory, a crown jewel of the Los Angeles astronomical community, has been off-limits for the last several years as it goes through its first major overhaul since it opened its doors in 1935. The official public opening will occur on November 3, but Joe Fierstein kindly gave Ron Rennie and myself two tickets to a sneak preview on Sunday, October 15 at 10:30 am. It pays to go to the monthly meetings!

Ron and I arrived at the L.A. Zoo parking lot 50 minutes after leaving south Torrance (including a ten-minute wait on the freeway, as a city crew finished painting over graffiti on an overpass) and climbed aboard a shuttle bus. Admission to the Observatory is technically free of charge, but cars are no longer allowed anywhere near the Observatory, and a ticket for the shuttle costs \$5.50. The shuttle was an ordinary mass-transit bus, which took 20 minutes to travel along Los Feliz Blvd. and wheeze slowly up Vermont Canyon Road.

Stepping off the bus, we were met with a splendid view of the city and of the cleaned-up Art Deco facade of the Observatory, free of the scaffolding and construction-site debris that had disfigured it over the last few years. We were greeted by Kara Knack, who gave a brief introduction and then invited us in. The biggest change has been the addition of a lower level, containing the Gunther Depths of Space gallery, the Leonard Nimoy Event Horizon theater, the Cafe at the End of the Universe and the Stellar Emporium bookstore and gift shop.

We spent the next two hours wandering through the exhibits. One wall of the Depths of Space gallery is filled with "The Big Picture", a high-resolution view of a sliver of sky that includes the center of the Virgo cluster of galaxies. The other side of the gallery is a set of exhibits about each planet, including a scale to measure your weight if you were standing on each planet's surface. I noticed that everyone who examined the Pluto exhibit was delighted to find that they weighed only 20 pounds or so.

Some of the astronomical knowledge was hardly new, but it was nice to be reminded that one's weight wouldn't change much if you stood on the surface of Venus, Saturn, Uranus or Neptune. Other bits of knowledge come to us courtesy of the modern era of space probes; did you know that lava flows have been seen on asteroids? The old planetarium projector is on display, as is the central plug of the 200-inch Palomar mirror. Two large iron meteorites are on display, and the old Tesla coil is still in its cage, although not in action. Indeed, many of the displays are still incomplete; the staff members have their work cut out for them in the next three weeks.

We finished up at the Cafe, lunching on coffee and Wolfgang Puck's beef sandwiches before being shuttled back to the parking lot. We can be proud that the City has done such a fine job of refurbishing a landmark. Many of the improvements will not be noticed by the casual observer, but it's nice to know that the Observatory will be able to carry on for several more decades.

- Dr. Steven Morris

November – Comets & Asteroids

Comets Visible in September:

Comet	Mag	Constellation(s)
SWAN (2006 M4)	8.6 – 11.6	Her-Aql

Asteroid Occultations:

Local Time		Durn	Star	Mag	Star	Planet	Alt
D M Y	Hr	Min	m/sec	mag	drop	No.	Name
06-Nov-06	4	4.3	0.6s	10.3	6.5	TYC 0282-00414-1u	1813 Imhotep
18-Nov-06	19	19.5	0.9s	10.5	4.6	TYC 6286-00865-1u	670 Ottegebe
25-Nov-06	18	4.8	2.4s	10.6	4.6	TYC 5764-01407-1u	601 Nerthus

Planetary Occultations:

None

Check the JPL Ephemeris Generator page for coordinates of these objects at:
<http://ssd.jpl.nasa.gov/horizons.cgi#top>

Dues for the Calendar year: 2007

If you have just joined us this year, or if your membership expires on December 31, 2006, you can renew with the following schedule.

Pro-rated Schedule <----- PLUS----->			2007 standard year			
Membership Expires	Individual Rate/ Family Rate	Student Rate	Year 2007 Rate	Individual Rate/ Family Rate	Student Rate	New Expiration Date
Dec 06	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$30.00	\$25.00	12/31/0
Nov 06	\$2.50	\$2.08		\$30.00	\$25.00	12/31/07
Oct 06	\$5.00	\$4.17		\$30.00	\$25.00	12/31/07
Sep 06	\$7.50	\$6.25		\$30.00	\$25.00	12/31/07
Aug 06	\$10.00	\$8.33		\$30.00	\$25.00	12/31/07
Jul 06	\$12.50	\$10.42		\$30.00	\$25.00	12/31/07
Jan/Jun 06	\$15.00	\$13.50		\$30.00	\$25.00	12/31/07

You can renew your membership on a pro-rated schedule to adjust your membership term to the standard calendar year. Your expiration date is shown on the monthly First Light mailing label. Please renew by check to the South Bay Astronomical Society, PO Box 1937, Redondo Beach, CA. 90278. Payments are also accepted at our general meetings.

- Ray Grace, Membership Committee
310-370-1913

Observing Reports

Ridgecrest - Ken Rossi and I went to Ridgecrest Saturday night. It was very nice, warm and dry. Using my new homebuilt scope I was able to locate the Ring Nebula and observe but not split the double-double (need to use a higher mag eyepiece). Also observed the Pleiades through my inexpensive 2" ep and it was a great view.

On Friday night I went to the Open House at El Camino College. Looking through their 16" scope or the 8 inchers I saw: Comet Swan (blue fuzzy, just the nucleus), Double cluster in Perseus, M2, M71, M57, Sheliak (Beta-Lyrae an eclipsing binary), M31 and M32 (together and separately), Neptune and Uranus. Viewed Jupiter and Mercury with binoculars at sunset. I highly recommend attending one of their Open House sessions.

- Arnie Stodolsky

Nightfall – For the dark-sky weekend, I attended the Nightfall star party in Borrego Springs for the first time. This is a rather unique star party in that it takes place at a desert resort that goes to a lot of effort to accommodate astronomers. All the exterior lights had been changed to red lights which was very nice to see. Although I must admit to being a little disconcerted to find myself in the 'red light' district of the town! The weather was very good, hot during the day, but with clear skies and very comfortable temperatures at night for an October evening. Unfortunately, I never did make it to any of the lectures. Having missed the first two days, arriving late on Friday, I spent the night observing and the next day sleeping.

Also attending Nightfall were Craig Gates, Steve Lindsey and Dan Trimble. We all set up in the RV parking lot. This was one surprising convenience that I had not anticipated. Being in the RV lot, made it possible to use an electrical outlet, provided you had the adapter the an RV would require. Dan, Craig and Steve made good use of this feature of the Palm Canyon Resort.

This was my first opportunity to use a new eyepiece, a 12mm Nagler. I have to say, it worked really well on globular star clusters. I have a couple other eyepieces of about the same size and the field of view of the Nagler was just so much better, it was absolutely breathtaking! It was like being in space, just a few light years away from the cluster

and having to turn your head to take the whole thing in. Even distant Uranus showed up nicely and I was able to resolve a couple of moons.

After giving my daughter, Rebecca, a quick tour of the sky, I spent the rest of the night imaging with my Meade Deep-Sky Imager. That first night, although the pictures were relatively easy to get, they were plagued by bleed-over in the pixels from bright stars. All through Friday night, we were treated to a very nice meteor shower, the Orionids, with some very bright meteors coming in at about the rate of 5-10 per hour. One spectacular meteor exploded high in the sky and left an ion trail that lingered for several minutes.

Initially, on my second night, I devoted more time to visual observing. My first target was Comet SWAN, which I showed to a few passers-by. Also observed was Comet Faye. I hunted down some very faint fuzzies from a book I'd purchased at RTMC, "Deep Sky Wonders". The list for October had some very challenging, faint objects. A couple of them turned out to be surprising. Where one galaxy was mentioned I found 3 or 4 other faint galaxies lurking in the surrounding area. I finished the night with some more photographic work, this time doing some more experimenting with settings on the DSI software. I finally found a way to eliminate the bleed-over that has plagued me for so long and the pictures from the 2nd night were much better. I was especially pleased with my image of NGC 891, an edge-on spiral galaxy. Even the Crab Nebula showed more detail than I've ever gotten before. I shall have to see if what I learned these two nights continues to work in the future. The 2nd night had to be cut short due to having to face a long drive back to LA the next day, but it was really great to be able to spend two nights under dark, clear skies instead of the usual one night in a month.

- Ken Munson

Schedule of Coming Events

3 November Friday Evening 7:30 PM	Monthly General Meeting State of the Club Presentations & Elections
6 November Monday Evening 7:30 PM	Monthly Planning Meeting See directions on Page 5.
8 November Wednesday 11:30 AM	Mercury Transit Meet at Hesse Park in RPV to provide public viewing of the transit of Mercury.
11 November Saturday Evening	In Town Dark Sky Observing Session – Weather Permitting: Please contact Greg Benecke to confirm that the gate will be opened! Take Hawthorne Blvd. south across Pacific Coast Hwy.; continue up the hill past Silver Spur and turn left at Highridge. Go one mile and turn left on Whitley Collins, up one block and turn left on Northbay Rd., the new parking lot is at the end on the left. Enter parking lot and turn left, the gate is at the east end (it should be open about 15 minutes before sunset) and a paved road leading into the playground where we have traditionally set up. If at all possible, drop your equipment off and park your car in the new parking lot (less than 200 feet away). If you are absolutely certain that your vehicle does <u>not</u> drip anything you can park with your equipment. <i>Drive with care</i> to avoid steel pillars supporting basketball nets. Note: If you a visitor, not bringing a scope, it is requested that you park in the small parking lot on Northbay Rd.
16 November Thursday Evening 7:00 PM	Von Kármán Auditorium (Thursday) & Vosloh Forum at Pasadena City College (Friday) “Black Holes in the Universe” by Curt Cutler. In this lecture he will try to explain what black holes are, in theory, and give a brief overview of some of their remarkable properties. He will then review some of what we know observationally about black holes in Nature.
17 November Friday	Leonid Meteor Shower Peak Predicted peak of the shower is 19:11 UT which is about 11:11 AM PST.
18 November Saturday Evening	Out-of-Town Dark Sky Observing Session Contact Greg Benecke to coordinate a location for the dark-sky trip.
1 December Friday Night 7:30 PM	Monthly General Meeting Speaker: TBA
3 December Sunday Night	Moon Occults the Pleiades As the moon rises shortly sunset, the Pleiades will be hidden behind it. As the evening progress, this spectacular open cluster will gradually be revealed.
4 December Monday Night 7:30 PM	Monthly Planning Meeting Location: TBA

Attachment: Board Nomination Form

SOUTH BAY ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY EXECUTIVE BOARD ELECTIONS NOVEMBER 2006

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The SBAS Executive Board positions are open for nominations.

Those individuals placed in nomination for a Board Position will be chosen by member vote during the SBAS November General Membership Meeting at the El Camino College Planetarium at 8:00 PM

The Board positions open for nominations are listed below. Positions are for one year terms.

To place a member in nomination write the nominee's name next to the position desired.

President

Vice-president

Secretary

Treasurer/Astronomical League
Representative

Current Board Members are the following individuals:

President

Kenneth Rossi

Vice President

Greg Benecke

Secretary

Deanna Chafe

Treasurer/Astronomical League Rep.

Arnie Stodolsky

South Bay Astronomical Society

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***General Meeting at El Camino College Planetarium:
Friday, November 3rd at 7:30 P.M.***

State of the Club Presentations

Elections!

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**South Bay Astronomical Society
P.O. Box 1937
Redondo Beach, CA 90278**