



East Valley Astronomy Club

October

Newsletter

1995

EVAC MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

EVAC President Don Wrigley opened the October Club Meeting at 7:38 PM. He spent the first few minutes pointing out the various items on the front table which included the *CCD Deep Sky Atlas* and some finder charts for Comet Hale-Bopp. During this part of the meeting, a projector screen was located. Don ask visitors to introduce themselves and there were 6 people do so out of 50 in attendance.

The results of the Camelback Inn Star Party were mentioned. Seven telescopes showed and the club received a \$450 donation, of which \$50 was spent on pizza since the group was not fed by the resort.

Frank Kraljic planned a Sidewalk Astronomy session at the Scottsdale Pavilion for September 30th in honor of John Dobson's 80th birthday. He passed around a sign-up sheet. Don did the same for a private star party at Lost Dutchman Park for September 22nd. Also mentioned was a possible private star party near Heber on October 22nd.

After meeting with Ray Farnsworth of Arizona City, Don decided to use his land for the All-Arizona Star Party on October 20 & 21. The new site is five miles past last year's, turning left at the gate. Maps will be provided.

All of these announcements took about 15 minutes, during which the screen was finally setup. Dan Heim was introduced as the night's speaker. His topic was atmospheric phenomena caused by water and ice.

Thanks to Paul Dickson who took these notes in absence of the Secretary.

SCC PUBLIC STAR PARTY

A star party in support of the Scottsdale Community College and the public will be held on Friday, October 27th, at the College. Please spread the word to your friends, co-workers, and schools. Don Wrigley will also try to get some flyers created. If you can support this function, contact Don soon (via the back cover).

OCTOBER GUEST SPEAKER

The speaker, Ken Edgett, is involved with the 1996 Mars missions and heads the education outreach effort. He obtained his Ph.D. in geology from ASU in 1994, after several years examining sand dunes on Mars and Earth. His topic: Surveying the Red Planet from Arizona—The Next Ten Years.

Arizona has drawn Mars scientists for over a hundred years. Indeed this year marks the 100th anniversary of Percival Lowell's book, *Mars*. Despite tight federal budgets, the next decade of Mars exploration will include an exciting array of landers and orbiters sent at each launch opportunity: 1996, 1998/99, 2001, 2003 and 2005. Four of these spacecraft are being produced right now. The first two, Mars Global Surveyor (orbiter) and Mars Pathfinder (lander) will launch in 1996. Both have strong Arizona connections. Some parts for the instruments on these spacecraft were manufactured in Arizona, and several instrument science teams on both missions are headquartered at ASU or the U of A. In addition, at ASU there is a vigorous K-12 education outreach program underway to help students become "participants" in the exploration of Mars. The East Valley Astronomy Club helped this effort by conducting a public star party at ASU in February 1995 during the Mars opposition.

UPCOMING CLUB EVENTS

EVAC Club Meeting, Oct. 11, 7:30 PM
SCC, Physical Sci. Bldg, Room PS 172

All AZ Star Party, Oct. 20&21, Sunset 5:46 PM
Arizona City Site

SCC Public Star Party, Oct. 27, Sunset 5:39PM
SCC observing pad—accessed through garden

Local Star Party, Oct. 28, Sunset 5:38 PM
Florence Junction Site

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Don Wrigley

Well, it's that time of year again and in this fall season, the amateur astronomer's fancy turns to thoughts of...Star Parties! Yes, the air is cooler, the skies are clearer, the nights longer, and the All-Arizona Star Party promises to be the biggest and best ever. I've been receiving inquiries from all over: Texas, Colorado, Utah, and even the Netherlands! Although the weather has not been overly cooperative the past couple of years, I'm hoping we'll beat the odds this year and have clear skies. As a reminder, the site is on private land—please take all your trash out with you including cigarette butts. A port-a-john will be the only "luxury" so pack accordingly. Don't forget lots of warm clothes—the desert is once again cold at night. Please thank our host, Ray Farnsworth, if you see him.

It's also time to start thinking about nominations for November's election of officers. The order of business for the October meeting will include nominations for all the Board positions. I am told we have at least one nominee for each position except that of newsletter editor. This is an important position that requires some degree of effort every month. Sam Herchak and Bob Kearney have done an exceptional job with the newsletter this year and understandably, would like to see the torch passed on, so to speak. So members, here is a chance to get involved, speak your mind, and add your own personal touch to what has become, in my opinion, one of the best club newsletters around.

Editor's Note: Anyone with a computer and a modem will find the newsletter an easy job, but time consuming. Between the astro forums, member's articles, and forwarded email, there is plenty of material. But it does take many hours each month to format and edit the various material. Who ever decides to take over for 1996 can rest assured help will be available!

1996 ASTRONOMICAL CALENDARS

The Club has received several calendar samples from various publishers that will be displayed at the next two meetings. Some are available at a group rate, so if you expect to purchase a calendar for 1996, please look these over. Sam Herchak will take orders and submit them en masse after the November Club meeting.

ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY

Sam is also looking for a commitment from other Club members for EVAC to participate in the State's Adopt-A-Highway program. If the support is there, he will submit the paperwork to have EVAC adopt a two mile stretch of Highway 60 near the Florence Junction observing site. In return for the Club bagging trash along the road three times a year, the State will erect an Adopt-A-Highway sign with EVAC's name on it. See back cover to contact Sam for this project.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Club membership now stands at 113. Please join the Club officers in welcoming the following members who have joined since the June newsletter:

Norman Arthur	Rick Rachkofski
Bob Bates	Steve Roquemore
Marcia Collette	Llyod Sherman
Russ Chmela	Ken Spruell
Art Granados	Ken Tullis
Bruce Jones	Carl Visintainer
Eron Lee	Bill Weide
Kenneth Pullis	

We also welcome Steve Mutz, the Club's new advisor at SCC. Steve has a PhD in astronomy and a couple of EVAC members as students! Say hi to him at the October 27th star party.

NEW MEMBER HANDOUTS

Better late than never, right? For those new to EVAC this year, several handouts are waiting for you including the handy *Best Deep Sky Objects* from Kalmbach Publishing. Please contact John Durham to get yours: 981-8875 daytime, or 981-0616 evenings and weekends.

MEMBERSHIP LIST

The new membership list included in this newsletter is for EVAC members only. To protect people's privacy, complimentary newsletters sent to astronomy shops, etc. do not contain the listing. Non-members who need to reach an EVAC member can contact a Club officer to pass a message.

COULTER OPTICAL BANKRUPT

Coulter Optical is filing for bankruptcy. The following note comes off the Internet:

Coulter went out of business due to my father's illness. Our family has had some really bad luck including a terrible car accident a year ago and open-heart surgery last November. My brothers tried very hard to keep things together but unfortunately, my Dad was the glue. There was no where else to turn. I believe they are going into chapter 7 and plan to try to pay back any deposits by selling equipment, etc.. This has been a very sad time for my father, mother and brothers since they all had relied on the company for income.

Julie Braginton

Editor's Note: This is a sad time for amateur astronomy as well. Coulter Optical ran with John Dobson's idea and produced a huge number of inexpensive Dobsonians that opened the sky to countless amateurs, myself included. They will be very much missed.

TEXAS STAR PARTY '95

by Bernie Sanden

Night life in West Texas takes on a special meaning every May as hundreds of dark sky seekers converge on Prude Ranch, located just outside Fort Davis, Texas. Fort Davis is a small ranching community near McDonald Observatory, surrounded by vast, open range land far from the noise, smog, and lights of any city. During the dark-of-the-month, hundreds of deep sky enthusiasts gather for a week of hearty observing. The tools they wield are often large, a 12" or 13" scope pales besides the mighty 18" and 25" skyscrapers which seem to sprout randomly about the telescope fields. Besides having skies above which reveal the cosmos on par with nearly any other location in the lower 48, the southern site allows those hailing from more northerly locales to see a swath of the heavens not normally available to them—and one of the better swaths, at that! This year was heavily attended, with hundreds of scopes in use on the various observing fields beneath the star-studded skies.

Monday May 22nd; the first official day of the Texas Star Party (TSP) started with clear blue skies. We arrived late-morning after an 11 hour pilgrimage from Tempe. "We" is short for Tom Polakis, Riku Henriksson, and myself. Riku made the pilgrimage from his home in Finland in order to visit friends in the USA and hopefully bag a week of dark-sky observing in temperatures above freezing, something rarely done in Finland. Auroral activity in Texas was also expected to be minimal, which Riku was counting on.

What we were not counting on but understood was the climate of this piece of real estate. Call it a CFR (cloud-forming region) or a PITA (pain in the ... um, aperture), but this place has some notoriety attached. Perhaps only Arizonans are sufficiently spoiled to whine about the hit-and-miss prospects of late spring clear skies in West Texas, but I did notice the special attention the satellite image received in the Prude Ranch lobby. Sure enough, Tom hinted to us of trouble when he spotted the first puff of seemingly innocent cumulus rising above the hills to the east. It steadily grew and expanded, then seemed to divide and multiply. By sunset the sky was filled with both high and low level cloud cover. Undaunted and with an air of defiance, Barbara Wilson of the Houston Astronomical Society cranked the volume on her boom box to fill the upper field with a fitting TSP anthem "Texas," unknowingly served up by Chris Rea. As a group collected near fellow Houston club member Larry Mitchell's 36" Obsession, the Party was on, with or without stars.

Waiting it out while swapping stories is the general rule of thumb at TSP (interesting story about hunting down Palomar globulars, but what's this about Marfa lights?). By 11 PM, there were openings in the cloud cover, and by midnight it was clear down to 5 degrees of

the horizon in every direction. Larry's scope was put to immediate use hunting down faint galaxy clusters and I took up position at my scope to begin feasting on the celestial servings. Steadily the sky improved, although the dew settled in for an extended course, as well. Although my observing sheets felt like wet napkins, I managed to devour a half dozen objects on my self-prepared "deep south" observing menu before the Moon made its appearance. Watching the 24-day old Moon rise over the far hills at 50X, with a chaparral scrub bush silhouetted in front, was the icing on the cake. The TSP had arrived in full and my observational hunger-pangs were over.

In a rather uncanny pattern, each night yielded about the same percentage of clear dark hours as the next, perhaps half of each being observationally usable. All but the last night started with various degrees of cloud cover, which gradually diminished as the night progressed. The last night started out wonderfully clear, but the sky slammed shut by 2 AM. In any event, those fortunate to stay the week had plenty of time to add generously to their observing lists.

Observing under these skies was the main pursuit of course, with most of the extraordinary views beheld at the eyepieces of the "skyscrapers." Riku came without a scope (which by the way, is not a handicap—just ask Tom Bopp!), but not without an agenda. I marveled as he painstakingly drew and described nearly every object he viewed. By the end of the week, he had a stack of observing cards a couple inches thick. Riku is the leader of the Deep Sky Section in his local astronomy club. Although it might seem unlikely given the local observing conditions (frigid cold, midnight sun, persistent auroral activity, no Omega Centauri!), my impression is that they are an extremely accomplished observing group. One of his main pursuits was to draw his eyepiece view of as many Hickson galaxy clusters as possible, thus spending a lot of time around the 'scrapers. As for myself, one of the most memorable views was of the interacting "Ring-Tail" galaxies, NGC 4038-9 in Corvus, through Larry Mitchell's 36" Obsession. Both "antennae" were faint but at least partially visible, forming delicate arcs beyond the main galactic bodies. The northernmost arc was readily apparent—perhaps 3 arc minutes in length, while a portion of the thinner southern arc could be glimpsed with some patience and averted vision. The view, imprinted upon my memory, should last as one of the top observational thrills (hypered-Kodak moments?) I've had. Riku came in one morning after having just spent some time at the 36" aimed somewhere within the Veil Nebula; he mentioned something about glimpsing heaven, although I don't think he tried to draw it.

The smaller scopes were by no means relegated to less-meaningful duties. All types and sizes of scopes were in use and talking to owners affirmed to me that there is certainly no correlation between size of scope and

deep sky competency. The TSP group for the most part impressed me as being highly-knowledgeable deep sky observers who had come to spend a significant percentage of time doing serious observing. Nonetheless, the atmosphere was loose and generous time was dedicated by most towards walking the field, taking a look in neighbors' scopes, and just plain chatting. In any event, the behemoth scopes nearly always seemed equipped with lines of anxious observers attached, occasionally in some quasi-momentous discussion related to the present view. Each morning, Saturn would rise and many of the hardy folks who had outlasted the night would wait for steady air in order to glimpse the gaseous giant near ring-plane crossing. A few times near the end of the week, the planet was high and the air steady enough to get views of a seemingly ringless Saturn. Some of its fainter inner moons had now become plainly visible. All in all, if you had a scope, or visited your neighbors, you had your fill of observing.

The days had their moments as well, with an added bonus of being able to see who you were talking to, often recognizing someone you had met the night before not by sight but by a characteristic manner of speech. Vendor booths were one of the main epicenters at the ranch, with present and future business deals going on at any given time. And diversions were there as well. Tom has in his possession an exclusive, yet-to-be-released made-for-TV documentary on the mysterious Marfa Lights which perplex the locals, or at least gives them something to do on hot summer evenings. We added to their community coffers by purchasing "I Saw the Lights" t-shirts in downtown Marfa. Why these lights appear in pairs is a dreadful enigma to some, but we ain't tellin' lest them Marfa town elders (the Marfia?) come to persuade us otherwise.

The afternoon and evening talks included a contribution by Tom on observing the best edge-on galaxies as well as Riku's overview of amateur astronomy in Finland. The finale was Halton Arp's Saturday evening talk in which he offered evidence suggesting that quasars emanate (are ejected?) from galactic centers. He believes the redshift is extremely limited in its ability to estimate extra-galactic distances and is probably misleading. Though controversial, he has credible evidence and some serious concerns which do not fit the presently-favored cosmological models. I believe as an encouragement to continue along this less-traveled avenue of study, he was graced with a standing ovation as he left the platform.

Somehow, the days passed as quickly as the nights and the week's end was upon us. Of all the occurrences though, one stands above the others. It was not the Marfa light-related phenomenon such as the Telrad causing a thunderbolt or the odor-eating Marfalite rock outlet appearing in Alpine. Not even the time I had the exact change at a diner. Instead, to watch someone eat

a McDonald's hamburger for breakfast, one for lunch, and yet another for dinner on the same day will leave a lasting impression upon me. You deserve how many breaks today, Riku?

from *Sky&Telescope* Online via Compuserve

COMET de VICO DELIVERS

Comet de Vico is making a fine showing in the predawn sky. When Richard Didick observed it on the 28th, its coma looked extremely condensed, near 5th magnitude, with a tail extending at least 1.5 degrees to the west. Images show the tail to be rather complex, with multiple strands. This week Comet de Vico will be cruising across the constellation Leo, and on the morning of October 1st you'll find it just 1 degree west of Regulus.

COMET BRADFIELD CLIMBS

Another interloper, Comet Bradfield, is emerging gradually from the predawn glare as it too heads through eastern Leo, moving due north. In fact, on October 5th Bradfield will pass just 5 degrees north of Comet de Vico, putting them both in the same binocular field. Get those cameras ready!

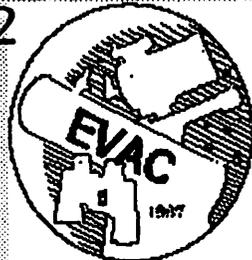
Tom Polakis provided this information on October 2nd: Use delta Leonis as the starting point for both comets. Comet de Vico is 3 degrees West and Comet Bradfield is 6 degrees to the star's North. For up-to-date info, see the Comet Home Page on the World Wide Web: <http://encke.jpl.nasa.gov/>

NEW U.S. CRATER

This week a conference of planetary geologists in Washington, D.C., found out that having a meeting there probably wouldn't have been a good idea 35 million years ago. That's when a 1 km-wide object slammed into what is now the lower Chesapeake Bay, punching through shallow ocean to make a huge crater roughly 85 km across, create a massive tsunami, and devastate that entire section of the East Coast. The crater has been suspected for several years, but new analyses of drill cores show that rocks in the region were severely shocked, a sure sign of impact.

REGRETS

My apologies to the following members who all submitted material for the newsletter. Because of the membership list, there wasn't room! I will bring copies of the news submitted by Paul Dickson and Frank Honer regarding legal problems that may doom the Large Binocular Telescope atop Mt. Graham, a progress report on a backyard observatory by Bill Dellinges, and "A Four Comet Night" by Tom Polakis. I hope to publish these in next month's newsletter as well.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29 *Moonset 11:04 PM *Daylight Save Time ends	30 *Moonset next day	31 *Moonset 12:10 AM *11:05 PM Occ *11:35 PM Algol Min	1 *Moonset 1:13 AM *ALL MONTH NOTES	2 *Moonset 2:14 AM *7:00 PM PAS Mtg	3 *Moonset 3:14 AM *7:30 PM SAC Mtg *Comet d Arrest/NGC 289	4 *Moonset 4:13 AM
5	6 Sunset 5:29 PM Sunrise 6:49 AM	7	8 7:30 PM EVAC Mtg *7:35 PM Occ *7:59 PM Occ	9 *11:54 Titan's shadow	10 *Moonrise 8:16 PM	11 *Moonrise 9:06 PM
12 *Moonrise 9:58 PM	13 *Moonrise 10:51 PM	14 *Moonrise 11:45 PM *2:22 AM Occ	15 *Moonrise next day	16 *Moonrise 12:42 AM *4:26 AM Occ	17 *Moonrise 1:39 AM	18 Deep Sky S P *Moonrise 2:38 AM *4:28 AM Algol Min *1:00 AM Leonid meteors *6:00 PM Venus/Jup/Mars
19 *Moonrise 3:39 AM *Sun/Saturn ring plane	20 *Moonrise 4:43 AM Sunset 5:21 PM Sunrise 7:02 AM	21 *1:17 AM Algol Min	22 *Mercury at Sup Conj *Pluto In Conj *6:00 PM Venus/Mars near miss!	23 *10:06 PM Algol Min *6:00 PM Young Moon - Planet trio	24 *Moonset 7:46 PM	25 Local S Party *Moonset 8:52 PM *11:10 PM Titan's shadow
26 *Moonset 9:58 PM	27 *Moonset 11:03 PM	28 *Moonset next day	29 *Moonset 12:08 AM	30 *Moonset 1:09 AM	1	2 

Date	Start	Title	Description
11/1/95	12:00 AM	ALL MONTH NOTES	<p>CALENDAR NOTES: For Occultation details (Occ), see the "1995 Occultation predictions for Phoenix" in the Feb EVAC Newsletter.</p> <p>PLANETS: MERCURY can be found not far from Spica early in the month low in the E before sunrise. VENUS gets higher in the early evening sky as Mars and Jupiter get lower. Be sure to watch these three during mid-month when they form a close group. Go out each evening around 6 PM to watch them dance. The Moon joins them on the 23rd. MARS is low in SW at sunset at mag 1.3. JUPITER is also low in SW at -1.8 mag. SATURN near meridian at sunset at mag 1.0. URANUS and NEPTUNE both set around mid-evening. PLUTO is in conjunction with the Sun and not visible. See Sky&Telescope (S&T) and Astronomy (Astro) for more details.</p> <p>OBJECTS OF INTEREST: Venus, Mars, and Jupiter conjunction. Comets!</p> <p>ASTRONOMICAL TWILIGHT TIMES: 1st 7:00 PM and 5:20 AM 22th 6:47 PM and 5:35 AM</p> <p>LUNAR LIBRATIONS: Excellent southern libration on 1st and 2nd. Switches to excellent northern libration on 12th and 13th. Good SE libration on 28th and 29th.</p>
11/2/95	7:00 PM	7:00 PM PAS Mtg	Phoenix Astronomical Society meeting, Brophy Prep, 4701 N. Central Ave. Turn off Highland into Main entrance, follow signs upstairs to Physics lab.
11/3/95	7:30 PM	7:30 PM SAC Mtg	Saguaro Astronomy Club meeting, Grand Canyon University, Fleming Bldg, Rm 105. Camelback and 33rd Ave.
11/3/95	9:00 PM	Comet d Arrest/NGC 289	Although not very bright, Comet d Arrest passes near the 11th mag galaxy NGC 289 in Sculptor
11/9/95	11:54 PM	11:54 Titan's shadow	Titan's shadow will transit the disk of Saturn. See Aug S&T for details
11/18/95	1:00 AM	1:00 AM Leonid meteors	Leonid meteors peak just after midnight and before moonrise. Zenith hourly rate: 12
11/18/95	6:00 PM	6:00 PM Venus/Jup/Mars	These three planets are tucked in a 2 degree area of the SW sky right after sunset
11/19/95	12:00 AM	Sun/Saturn ring plane	Saturn's ring plane passes N of the Sun
11/22/95	12:00 AM	Mercury at Sup Conj	Mercury on opposite side of Sun relative to Earth. Not visible!
11/22/95	12:00 AM	Pluto in Conj	Pluto also behind Sun relative to Earth.
11/22/95	6:00 PM	6:00 PM Venus/Mars near miss!	Venus only 12 arc minutes away from Mars after Sunset
11/23/95	6:00 PM	6:00 PM Young Moon - Planet trio	Thin crescent Moon grouped with Venus, Mars, and Jupiter low in SW sky after Sunset

East Valley Astronomy Club

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Phone	Name	Street	City, State, Zip
	Manfred Alber		
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	Norman Arthur		
	Brady & Jan Barnes		
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East Valley Astronomy Club

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East Valley Astronomy Club

Members as of 10/1/95

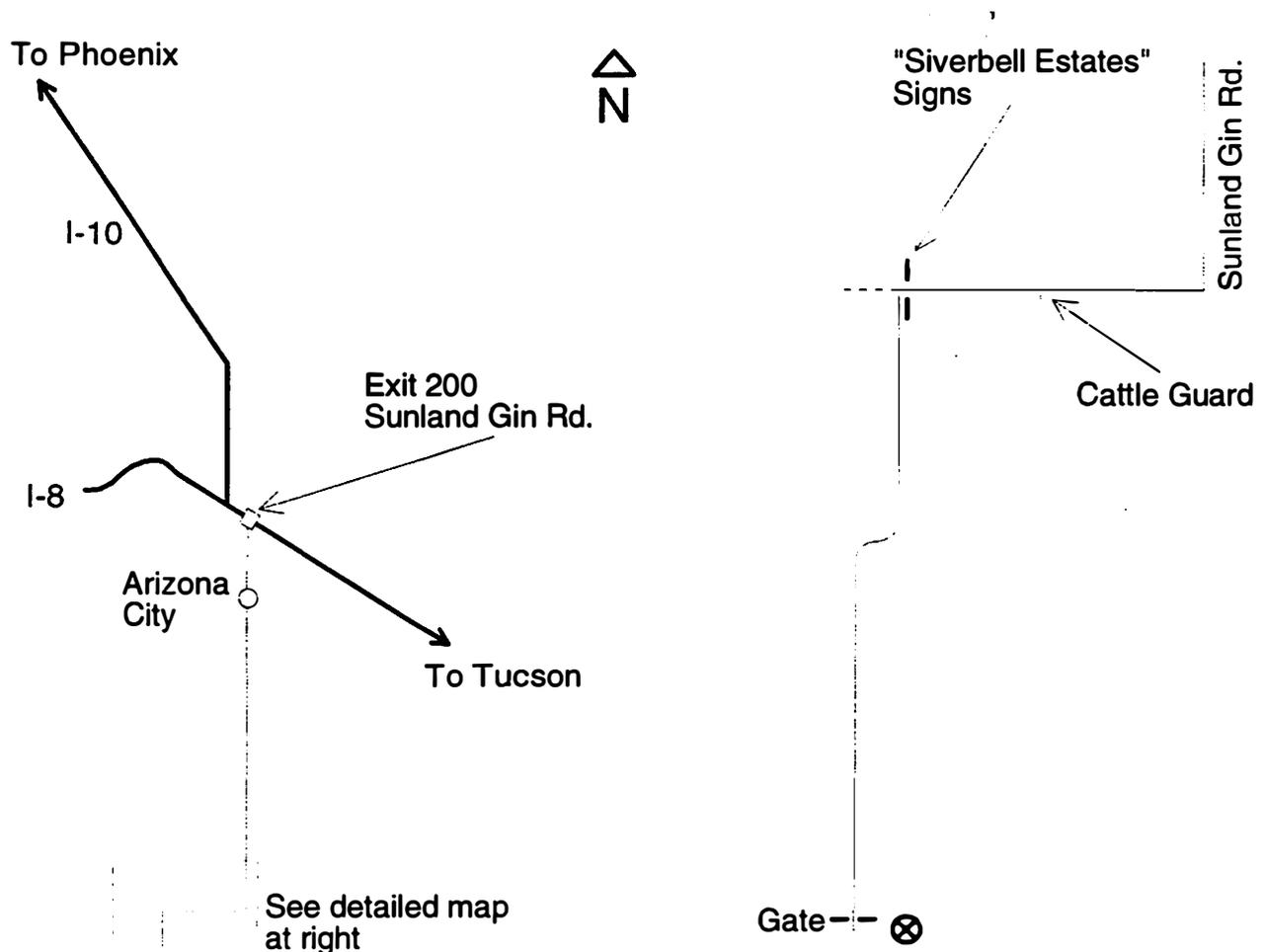
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	Homer & Ginny Willard		
	Russell Wilson		
	Don Wrigley		
	Mrs. Mazier's Sci. Class		
	Art Zarkos		
	Frank Zullo		

All-Arizona Star Party

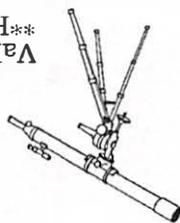
October 20-21, 1995

How to get there:

Take Interstate 10 to exit 200 (Sunland Gin Road). Turn south after exiting the freeway. After about 15 miles, the pavement ends and about one mile further, the road turns sharply to the west. After another four miles, the road will turn south just after the "Silverbell Estates" signs. Three miles past the signs, the road will veer off to the west. Continue on the main road for another five miles, where it passes through a gate. Take an immediate left after the gate and continue for 1/4 mile to the site.



Valued EVAC member since 1/17/92!
Hope to see you at the meeting Oct. 11th



EAST VALLEY ASTRONOMY CLUB
Sam Herchak, Editor
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Mesa, AZ 85206-1123

EAST VALLEY ASTRONOMY CLUB

President: Don Wrigley 982-2428	Vice-President: Robert Kerwin 837-3971	Treasurer: Sheri Cahn 246-4633	Secretary: Sam Herchak 924-5981	Properties: Steve O'Dwyer 926-2028
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MEMBERSHIP&SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$20.00 annually. Reduced rates available to members for *Sky&Telescope* and *Astronomy*. Contact Sheri Cahn, 4220 W. Northern #116, Phoenix, AZ 85051, (602)-246-4633.

CLUB MEETINGS: Second Wednesday of every month at the Scottsdale Community College, 7:30 PM. Normally Room PS 170 or 172 in the Physical Sciences Building.

NEWSLETTER: Published and mailed out the week before the monthly Club meeting. Send your thoughts and stories for publication to: Sam Herchak, 145 S. Norfolk Cir, Mesa, AZ 85206-1123, (602)-924-5981. Email to: 76627.3322@compuserve.com. Faxes welcome with prior notice.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Notify Bill Smith, 1663 S. Sycamore, Mesa, AZ 85202, (602)-831-1520. Email to: bsmithaz@aol.com.

EVAC LIBRARY: The library contains a good assortment of books, downloaded imagery, and helpful guides and is usually brought to the Club meetings. Contact Steve O'Dwyer for complete details, (602)-926-2028.

BOOK DISCOUNTS: Great savings for members through Kalmbach and Sky Publishing Companies. Contact Sam Herchak, 145 S. Norfolk Cir, Mesa, AZ 85206-1123, (602)-924-5981.

EVAC PARTY LINE: Let other members know in advance if you plan to attend a scheduled EVAC observing session. Contact Robert Kerwin, (602)-837-3971. Email to: p24493@gegpo7.geg.mot.com.