



# The Meridian

The newsletter of the  
Quad Cities Astronomical Society

June 2008

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## May Meeting Minutes

Joe Bannon, Secretary

The May meeting was called to order at approximately 7:35 and began with a vote on whether to maintain the club's membership in the Astronomical League. The board had previously recommended dropping the club's membership, largely due to the financial impacts given the current membership level. Members voted to drop the club's membership by a vote of 11-1. Ken Boquist, AICor representative, will notify the Astronomical League.

Gary then discussed plans for the certification program at the May 31 public star party. Those members with less than a year with the club were invited to attend but it was reiterated that the bylaws require membership for one year before someone will be certified and given the combination to the observatory. Cecil mentioned that the Board is the certifying authority. Gary asked that anyone interested in attending be there promptly at 7:00.

The Constellation of the Month and was led by Joe Bannon who discussed Hercules and the various globular clusters, double stars, planetary nebula and variable stars that provide something for everyone to see.

Joyce mentioned bringing two boys to the last party, one of whom was from Africa and their wonder at seeing the night sky. This led to a discussion of the need to track presentations made by the club and the form that exists to capture this information. Joe said he would send the form to Joyce to complete.

Gary and Ken discussed the possibility of presenting a session for beginners on how to read star charts, especially right ascension and declination.

The new worm gear has arrived and there was discussion on the schedule for installation. Steve VanHyfte is leading this effort and several members offered to help. One consideration is that installing the worm gear could take the scope out of service for some period of time. Whether now is the optimum time to do that was debated and Steve offered to make a presentation on the worm gear and current state of the scope at the June meeting.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:10.

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# Presidential Ramblings

Karl L. Adlon

This isn't exactly about astronomy, but you may find it interesting: NASA Report TM-2005-213559, "Realizing "2001: A Space Odyssey": Piloted Spherical Torus Nuclear Fusion Propulsion". The following is from the Abstract:

A conceptual vehicle design enabling fast, piloted outer solar system travel was created predicated on a small aspect ratio spherical torus nuclear fusion reactor. The initial requirements were satisfied by the vehicle concept, which could deliver a 172 mt crew payload from Earth to Jupiter rendezvous in 118 days, with an initial mass in low Earth orbit of 1,690 mt. Engineering conceptual design, analysis, and assessment was performed on all major systems including artificial gravity payload, central truss, nuclear fusion reactor, power conversion, magnetic nozzle, fast wave plasma heating, tankage, fuel pellet injector, startup/re-start fission reactor and battery bank, refrigeration, reaction control, communications, mission design, and space operations. Detailed fusion reactor design included analysis of plasma characteristics, power balance/utilization, first wall, toroidal field coils, heat transfer, and neutron/x-ray radiation. Technical comparisons are made between the vehicle concept and the interplanetary spacecraft depicted in the motion picture 2001: A Space Odyssey.



This is the something that exists between the reality of burning chemicals to get people into orbit, back to the Moon and maybe someday to Mars and the warp drive of science fiction. Note that a "few details" still need to be worked out.

For me, things have been slow on the astronomy side, having had a week vacation on the beaches of North Carolina, followed by a week in my "office" at work, followed by a week in our corporate offices in Winfield, a western Chicago suburb. I still have spring yard work to do and some house projects to do or have done, but at least I plan to be home enough to do some tinkering on telescopes: finishing one and getting experience using another. I just wish early summer nights were longer.

For new members and for those who may have forgotten: There is no monthly meeting in July or August. See you at the June Meeting!

A friend recently retired and has had trouble adjusting to life without a job. He keeps asking other people who have retired how they fill the time each day. Maybe I'll suggest "Sleep!" and do astronomy all night.

Judging from email traffic, members are informing others when they plan to use the observatory/go observing and others are joining them. I like it!

Wishing Us Clear Skies!

Karl

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# Observations

## Joe Bannon

As Karl noted, there are no meetings in July or August; but that doesn't mean you're on your own for summer stargazing. We still have Public Star Parties each during these months and as the sign up sheet below notes, we can still use help manning the observatory.

We also support the St. Ambrose Public Star Parties at the Menke Observatory in return for being allowed to use it for our Eastern Iowa Star Party. Robert can always use an extra set of hands and it can be an alternative if the club's public event don't fit into your schedule.

Also, Karl's suggestion about getting together if you have a common interest or need seems to have started off on the right foot. Dale and I met one night to trade newbie notes. I think I saw something about a group interested in astrophotography and Gary mentioned hosting something for people who want to learn how to read star charts.

And that's what the club should be and what brought me to it. There are more opportunities to participate and we've got a load of talent willing to share their skills. Come to the June meeting and make your summer plans with another club member!

## Upcoming Celestial and Club Events

June 7	Saturday	Mars near the Moon in Western twilight
June 8	Sunday	Saturn and Regulus shine above the Moon
June 16	Monday	Monthly Meeting (19:30) @ Deere-Wiman Carriage House
June 16-17	Mon. – Tue.	Passes just below Antares
June 19-20	Thu. – Fri.	Jupiter near the Moon
June 20	Friday	Pluto at opposition to the Sun; summer solstice
June 22	Sunday	Double shadow transit on Jupiter (21:40-22:44)
June 30	Monday	Mars and Regulus less than 1 <sup>o</sup> apart in west during evening twilight
July 1	Tuesday	Mercury is 22 degrees west of the Sun (Morning)
July 8	Tuesday	Jupiter reaches opposition
July 10	Thursday	Mars is 0.7 degrees to the lower left of Saturn (Evening)
<b>NO JULY MEETING!</b>		
July 23	Wednesday	Jupiter transits about 22:00
July 26	Saturday	Jens-Wendt Observatory – PUBLIC Star Party
Jul. 27–Aug 1	Sun – Sat	Nebraska Star Party
<b>NO AUGUST MEETING!</b>		
Sep. 5–7	Thurs – Sun	Astrofest
Sep. 25–28	Thurs – Sun	Prairie Skies Star Party
Oct. 3–5	Fri – Sun	Eastern Iowa Star Party

PUBLIC STAR PARTIES		
June 28		
July 26		
August 30		
September 27		

## PUBLIC STAR PARTY EXPECTATIONS

- ★ Each club member will sign up for at least one star party.
- ★ The first person should be a key holder; the second can be any member, key holder or not.
- ★ If it's your turn and something comes up, it's your responsibility to find a replacement.
- ★ You should get there about ½ hour after sunset and open up while there's some light.
- ★ Sign the log book.
- ★ You should be there if it's clear or if it's cloudy. No need if it's storming.
- ★ If it's cloudy, there are slides and a projector in the observatory. You can show slides, or talk about the observatory and telescope, describe opening the observatory, pointing the scope, what you can see through the scope, invite them back when it's clear. Tell them what you like to observe.
- ★ Recommend if it's cloudy you take a book, computer & DVD, etc. in case nobody else shows up.

Jens-Wendt Observatory – Quad Cities Astronomical Society – Located at Sherman Park in Dixon, Iowa

Monsignor Menke Observatory – St. Ambrose University – Located at Wapsi River Environmental Education Center in Dixon, Iowa

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## Member Astrophotos



Both of these images were taken by Joyce through the club's telescope at the April Public Star Party.

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## PSSP 2008 Brochure and Registration Available!

The 2008 Prairie Skies Star Party Brochure and Registration form are now available at [www.prairieskies.org](http://www.prairieskies.org). Have a great summer, but don't forget to register before the deadline! Hope to see you at Camp Shaw this fall for another fun event!

If you have trouble viewing or printing the Brochure or Registration form, please contact us with your mailing address, and we will be happy to send you a paper copy.

John Weber, Chairman  
Prairie Skies Star Party  
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## QCAS Contacts

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All other contacts can be sent to [qcas@mchsi.com](mailto:qcas@mchsi.com) or mailed to the club at P.O. Box 3706, Davenport, IA, 52808.

Members are also reminded that anyone can submit articles for *The Meridian*. Submit articles to Joe Bannon at [jbannon@midamerican.com](mailto:jbannon@midamerican.com) and [mzbannon@aol.com](mailto:mzbannon@aol.com).

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