



Night Visions

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Astronomical Society

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE—May, 2011

If you haven't paid your dues recently, you may want to check the list in this newsletter of currently due amounts. If a member has gone more than 4 months past due, the Treasurer drops their name from the membership list.

Saturday, May 8 is **International Astronomy Day** worldwide and at the Observatory. Chris still needs BRAS volunteers to help with the expected crowds. It will be from 3 PM until 11 PM and it should be a lot of fun. For the night viewing, the moon should be in its first crescent in the West and Saturn is already looking proud in the Eastern sky. Have you ever seen the Ghost of Jupiter? It is a good target that you can see during the Astronomy Day (nighttime) festivities.

Have you got an extra \$3,700 and want to take a great trip. I notice that Sky & Telescope is offering a trip next September to Chile to visit some of the "world's leading professional observatories" and the skies are almost always clear. If BRAS wants to send a representative on the trip, I may be able to find the time to represent the club. I would also be willing to give a talk about my trip when I return. After all, for a club expenditure of \$3,700, why wouldn't I be expected to tell about it. Oh Well, so much for the afternoon fantasy trip....

A Great Time to Live

Have you ever taken the time to think about the time in which we live. 400 years ago, Galileo brought about some major changes to the world but they were slow in being accepted. Earlier last century, Albert Einstein proposed a lot of far reaching situations but it took time for them to be accepted. Can you imagine how they must have lived without the benefits of computers and the internet. It is hard for me to realize that in our time, Bin Laden can be taken out on the other side of the world but we know about it almost as it is happening. We live in an amazing world today.

Not only is our world pretty amazing, we are in a tremendous technological explosion of information. We have learned more about our universe in the last 40 years that much of all of the time prior to then. That includes the trips to the Moon with the recovery of material that now tells us that the Moon is the result of a collision between the Earth and Thea that resulted in debris creating rings around the Earth for a while and then the creation of Luna. What would Galileo think if he were told that scenario.

Further, until just 10 years ago, we had no idea of other worlds existing in our universe. Today, scientists have already confirmed in excess of 500 planets revolving around stars. With more stars in our universe that there are grains of sand on all the beaches in Earth, you can bet that there are millions of other planets to find also. This is truly an amazing time that we are living in.

Again using the comparison with my favorite friend, Galileo, can you imagine his amazement of the photos that we are able to take from our ground telescopes, let alone the fantastic photos from Hubble or the other exotic telescopes circling the Earth. We, in our present world, have taken exploration and expanded technology for granted even to the point of being ticked off when our Iphone takes many seconds to download something. We should all be more appreciative of the time in which we are living.

As a Ham Radio operator, N5HE, I was amazed several months ago when I had a short conversation on my ham radio with Col Doug Wheelock while he was on the International Space Station. I asked him a question about "where are you from" hoping that he would tell me his home city. He misunderstood and thought I was talking about right then and said "we just left Argentina and we are now over the Bahamas". Can any of us comprehend someone flying in space and being able to talk to us lowly Earth bound people.

I hope that we all can recognize the great time in which we are living and can learn to appreciate this time of expanding technology.

More important to us as BRAS members,

MARVIN

VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hi Everyone,

Last month's meeting was great. Dr. Petculescu gave a wonderful presentation and it was pretty interesting to hear how the atmosphere's of some of our celestial neighbors could affect sound. Hopefully it won't be the last time we "hear" from him. (I couldn't resist...sorry.)

This month, of course, we are having our meeting supplemented by some Jambalaya. BRAS will provide the Jambalaya, beans and beverages. Feel free to bring along anything else to pass, but it's not required as this isn't the big pot luck we have in December. We'll hear some club news and surely talk about how Astronomy Day 2011 went over.

We'll also be hearing from BRAS member Trevor McGuire this month. Several weeks ago, Trevor gave a talk for a Friday night lecture on **Olber's Paradox**. He will reprise this interesting subject for our club this month. If you've never heard of Olber's Paradox...I guess you'd better come to the meeting!

Once again, I hope to see many of you out at the HRPO for our meeting. It's always great to catch up with everyone. And please, if you know someone that may be interested in astronomy (or free Jambalaya!), invite them to the meeting. You never know, it could be their first step in to a new hobby/obsession :)

See You Soon,

Ben Toman

BRAS VP

