

The Observer

SAN BERNARDINO VALLEY AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS

Member of The Astronomical League

<http://sbvaa.org/>



Volume #58, Issue 8

Since 1958

August, 2016

Meeting:

August 20, 2016

Location:

Pico Park
21950 Pico St.
Grand Terrace,
CA

5:00 to 7:30 p.m.

There won't be time for evening viewing but, if you have some solar equipment you might try for a bit of late afternoon "sun fun."

Program

Annual Summer BBQ

It's On!



As in years past, we don't have a regular club meeting in August, instead we have a social get-together. **On Saturday, August 20, we'll meet at Pico Park in Grand Terrace.** This is the same park we set up at for the Venus transit last summer.

Set up will begin about 4:00 pm or so and eating will commence after 5:00 pm. Our reservation ends at 8:00 p.m.

Bring any kind of food you like, and everyone usually shares what they have. If you can't bring food, we always need napkins, plasticware, paper plates and beverages too.

It's a nice opportunity to simply chat and hang out with your fellow members.

SBVAA Officers

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

Aug. 10, Outreach, Hermosa School,
Alta Loma

Sept/ 17, Club Meeting

*Other star parties, outreaches and events for
2016, TBA*

Rudy Rodriguez Scholarship Fund

A scholarship fund has been set up in the name of our former colleague, Rudy Rodriguez. As many of you may remember, Rudy was very generous every year at A.B. Miller High School, providing telescopes and scholarship funds from his own pocket to deserving students.

Ideally, A.B. Miller High would like for this scholarship fund to continue on as time goes by. The fund would help offset the cost of continuing education for at least one (if not more) deserving senior. Rudy's sister, Sandyt, and his niece, Jacquie (an A.B. Miller graduate) are in conversation with some close friends and will be directly involved with the selection process. It gives them great joy to know that Rudy's legacy might live on in this way.

Members -- FYI:

The executive committee has decided to "down play" Johnson Valley as a star party site. Attendance is usually minimal and other sites are closer to our general metropolitan area. Optional dark sites are being considered.

Chris, Tom, Rue & Martin can address your questions as well as listen to any suggestions.



SBVAA Members Presence Felt at RTMC 2016

By Scott Freeman

As many of you know, Martin Carey was the director of this year's Riverside Telescope Maker's Conference Astronomy Expo near Big Bear City. I was fortunate to attend this exciting event along with several of our other club members; our President Jamie "Rue" Countryman, Megan Huynh, associate editor of our newsletter, Bob White, Mike Radcliffe, and myself. The event was held on May 26-May 30th of this year.



Having only attended this conference once 15 years ago, I wasn't quite sure what to expect; but after several days at the Expo with some enthusiastic vendors, volunteers, presenters, and astronomers, both newcomers and veterans, I wasn't disappointed.

RTMC is held at the YMCA Camp Oakes, 6 miles from Big Bear City. After settling into my surroundings near Bose Lodge (the beginner's corner), I set about to get oriented to my surroundings. There were actually two very nice places for observing, a main hall for meals and meetings, and many vendor's booths. The atmosphere was gorgeous, surrounded by pines and mountain air. How can you go wrong when you are in the mountains?



One of the things that stood out about the event was that it offered a very diverse menu of activities for both beginning and advanced astronomers. One important speaker for beginner's corner was Ken Graun who writes astronomy books for children. The Beginner's Corner offered classes such as A Tour of the Night Sky, and a Walk through the Solar System. Other courses included one on Telescopes; Refractors, Reflectors and Catadioptrics, and How to Get the Most out of Your Telescope. (Courtesy of Martin), and a class on eyepieces. On Sunday afternoon, Megan and I were privileged to present a multi-media talk to children and parents on Mars. Her knowledge-base on the topic was spot on and precise. Participants enjoyed an interesting Q and A session, and built models of Mars with a generous amount of ice cream and toppings (thank you, Martin, for providing the toppings!) Questions, comments, and opinions on the Red Planet were diverse and thoughtful. After all, a great thing about science is that it allows for us to express and celebrate a variety of opinions.

There were many workshops and activities planned for the more advanced astronomers as well. Topics accommodated a diversity of interests, including, Astrophotography of the stars and sun, (including a contest on Astro imaging), Video Astronomy with CCD Cameras, Choosing the Correct CCD Camera, Masters of the Sky, Contributions of Women in Astronomy, Gravitational Waves, and Andromeda Galaxy and Milky Way Crash. Another highlight of the event was a telescope-building contest, whose winners have -shown their creativity and skill with their scopes.

Keynote Speaker for the Weekend was Dr. Tamitha Mulligan Skov, also referred to as "The Space Weather Woman." Her topic covered "space weather," the science of how the sun's activity and energy affects us on earth.

On Saturday evening, Rue, Megan and I led a star party for families and others new to the hobby. We

used a 4-inch refractor and two 12-inch dobs, and were able to treat the crowd to a number of celestial delights. They included Mars, (we clearly saw some markings on the Red Planet) Jupiter (the belts and zones were easily visible in the clear evening sky), and the rings of the gas giant Saturn. There were so many other objects to enjoy. The steady night of seeing allowed us to enjoy the Ring Nebula, the show-stopping globular clusters M13 and M92 in Hercules, and many objects along the Milky Way. We were able to see the large spiral galaxy M81 and the irregular galaxy M82 in the same field of view in Ursa Major. One participant who looked through my scope learned for the first time what a galaxy really is and that she could observe it from an Earth-based telescope. Other objects that impressed the families on this evening included the Trio in Leo (an impressive collection of three galaxies: M65 and M66, and NGC 3628), and some of the many galaxies in Virgo. Using her 4" refractor and altazimuth mount, Rue was easily able to track and show the international space station. This object was a delight to all who saw it.

There were also star parties on Friday and Saturday evenings, on the upper field with Martin and Mike Radcliff leading the Saturday event. The seeing was excellent, allowing us to pick out much subtle structure in galaxies that was usually invisible. The onsite observatory with the 14" Celestron delighted the stargazers, and the views through Martin's 20-inch Dobsonian were exciting. Perhaps the highlight of Saturday evening was our very own Bob White's custom-built 8.5 inch refractor, which was both a beauty to behold as well as look through. This project was several years in the making and its superior craftsmanship shined as brightly as the stars it showed. It received a much-deserved award. Some of the objects seen that stood out on those evenings included the Whirlpool galaxy M51, galaxies M101, M108 and the barred spiral M109 (showing off its central bar), and many small globular clusters in Sagittarius.

Vendors were available each day to give advice on all kinds of gear, from eyepieces to refracting telescopes to solar filters, to astrophotography equipment, and a ton of great used equipment. The group of vendors was deep and diversified, were only too happy to help, and they came ready to deal!



I mentioned that Martin Carey was the Director of this year's RTMC Expo, a fellow observer and friend of over 20 years. Although I was very impressed with the success of the event, I was not surprised. I saw his organizational ability, his attention to detail, supportiveness of volunteer staff and

people-oriented approach shined through. Most importantly, his passion for astronomy shone as brightly as the sun during solar observing. Hat's off to you, Martin. We are looking forward to great things from RTMC in the future!

The San Bernardino Valley Amateur Astronomers were well-represented this weekend. A good time was had by all!

Martin & Rue
at RTMC, 2016

