

# Rappahannock Astronomy Club

## Minutes, January 16, 2019, Meeting

In attendance:

Jean Benson  
David Bentz  
Bart and Linda Billard  
Scott Busby  
Don Clark  
Glenn Faini  
Glenn Holliday

Troy Major  
Scott Lansdale  
Amy and Rich Lieberman  
Rolando Pancotti  
Tim Plunkett  
Matt Scott

The meeting began shortly after 7:00 p.m. Eleven members and 4 visitors were present. The visitors joined the club at the meeting.

## Program

The program for this meeting was “New Astronomy Gear Workshop.” Amy and Rich Lieberman brought in some equipment that Rich said belonged to his late father. He said he went to New Mexico to sort through his father’s collection and tried to pick a couple of items that looked the least complicated and most likely not to require some other item in the collection that he was unprepared to identify. His gear included a Sky-Watcher 4-inch ED refractor telescope and a giant set of binoculars. Glenn Holliday said Sky-Watcher telescopes were generally somewhat higher quality than Celestron telescopes. Scott Busby looked inside the case and found 5-mm and 20-mm 1-1/4-inch eyepieces, a 2-inch diagonal, and a finder with a right-angle eyepiece. Rich also had a tripod, but it lacked a head and did not seem sturdy enough for the refractor. Scott B. suggested Rich would need to get an altitude/azimuth mount with a Losmandy dovetail clamp, and that OPT could tell Rich what mounts fitting that description were available. He also suggested choosing a non-computerized mount. Scott Lansdale brought up the need for considering the weight limit of the mount. Scott Busby estimated it would need to be about 40 pounds and mentioned he prefers to find used equipment, recommending Astromart and Cloudy Nights as good websites for finding used astronomy equipment.

Next we looked at the binoculars Rich brought. Again, they would need some sort of mount to help steady the views. Someone mentioned getting a tripod with a pan/tilt head. Bart Billard described the stand he built from a kit he saw at a Northeast Astronomy Forum meeting a few years ago. He said he would email Rich after the meeting to tell him the name of the kit and the source. Rich was unsure whether he and his wife would want to invest enough for a mount for the Sky-Watcher refractor. We suggested starting with the binoculars would be a good idea for getting a feel for their interest in astronomy. Scott Lansdale suggested they might be able to arrange to use the Sky-Watcher with a borrowed mount at a star party. Others suggested Myron Wasiuta was likely to have one. Scott Busby judged the refractor was in pristine condition and that it could sell for 20 percent below retail (maybe even 15 percent), if Rich and Amy decided to sell it. Rich indicated he thought the idea of starting with the binoculars was a good one.

Rolando Pancotti said he was having trouble using a laser collimator with his small Orion reflector telescope. Glenn Holliday encouraged him to take them to the next star party. He said before sunset was the best time to get help with collimation.

## Old Business

- Treasurer’s Report—Tim Plunkett presented the report for December 31. The total incoming was \$85, consisting of four dues payments and an MSRO donation from Ryan Rapoza. There were no expenditures. We had 25 paid members for 2018, with 15 paid for 2019 and 2 paid through 2020. Scott Lansdale asked whether David Abbou’s payment should cover one more year. He remembered (correctly) the November report showed it as a \$60 payment.

- *Stargazer* Update—Linda Billard said that she had most of what she needs for the next *Stargazer*. The only items outstanding were an Astronomy Math contribution from Scott Busby, a couple of star party reports, and one Ron Henke was doing on Vera Rubin and Tucson. Linda said she would also interview Shannon Morgan for an article on her MSRO work.
- Completed Events—The skies were good for the January star party at Caledon, and 7 members and 6 guests attended. Scott Busby said it was not so cold, though a little windy. He said he talked with Tom Watson, who did astrophotography with his DSLR camera on an 8-inch telescope. Scott B. said he had taken his Unitron 142 vintage telescope. He found Polaris was in the trees from where he set up, but he somehow got good polar alignment with just a compass. Scott B. said the telescope was a 1960s achromat, but the quality of the optics was amazing.

## New Business

- Events—Glenn Holliday went over the list of events in the agenda. Linda said David Abbou had to move the January 4 Mountain View High School Science Club event to a week later. The event for January 21 at the Shiloh School site in Northumberland was one Glenn H. had had difficulty responding to voicemails he received from the Astrophotography Club there. He finally talked to the coordinator and learned it was intended for the Monday lunar eclipse but was scheduled for Monday evening. Unfortunately, the eclipse would already be over by then. The site has two restored one-room schools, one of them originally built in 1906. The events February 21 at Conway Elementary School and April 10 at Park Ridge Elementary School are outreach events David Abbou has planned, and members who are interested in assisting can contact him. Glenn H. said he also had a request for a program on astrophotography in July from the Library located in the Spotsylvania Mall, and one from the King George Library for a campout star party in June. He went over the program list for Caledon, saying David Hiles would not be able to do the planned program on planets for April 6. March 2 was the Messier Marathon star party. Glenn H. said he saw news about new observational evidence for a type of phase change that has been suggested would occur as white dwarf stars cool. He thought it was a possible program topic. The schedule had two June star parties because the New Moon occurs twice in that month. Someone asked about Belmont dates, and Scott Busby confirmed that members would be welcome to call him to arrange for a stargazing visit on a Saturday or other dark night.
- Club Equipment Inventory—Glenn Holliday said the inventory on the club website was a 2011 draft, which he did not think was the most recent inventory. Scott Lansdale said that when he was vice president, he put together a spreadsheet inventory that would be more recent.
- Lending Library—Tim Plunkett said he had the library (magazines, etc.) in his garage and did not mind keeping it there. He did admit he might have trouble finding an item requested.
- Club Documents on Website—Glenn Faini said he and Linda had started working on updating the Bylaws. He said the FAQs also need a look, and he thought we should schedule reviews of the documents listed in the agenda, perhaps each year in January or February. Glenn Holliday asked whether we should attempt to get a picture of what loaner equipment was most used.
- Embroidered Club Shirts or Patches?—Glenn Faini showed the image of the club logo set up for embroidery by Rocky Top Embroidery in King George. Embroidering cost in addition to a \$25 setup fee would be \$18 per item in quantities of 1 to 10 or \$15 each for larger quantities. Larger quantities would also qualify for a 10 percent discount on the cost of items embroidered. Rich said he works with Queensboro Embroidery in North Carolina and thought they might have a better deal with free embroidery if you buy the clothing items from them.
- Richmond Astronomical Society (RAS)—We discussed star parties at Westmoreland as a possibility for coordinating with RAS. We had gone there once a year for a while before our contact there left the park. A new visitor center was built on the field we had used by the time of our last event there, creating a possible problem if its lights are left on, but Westmoreland might be a nice star party site for an annual event.

## Next Meeting

The next meeting is on Wednesday, February 20, 2019, at the Headquarters Library on Caroline Street, downtown Fredericksburg.