

# THE FLINT RIVER OBSERVER

Newsletter of the Flint River Astronomy Club  
Vol. 8, No. 1 March, 2004

---

**Officers:** President, **Steven (Smitty) Smith:** [Saratoga@flinriverastronomy.org](mailto:Saratoga@flinriverastronomy.org); Vice President, **Larry Fallin:** [mudarra@flinriverastronomy.org](mailto:mudarra@flinriverastronomy.org); Secretary, **Doug Maxwell:** [doug@flinriverastronomy.org](mailto:doug@flinriverastronomy.org); Treasurer, **Steve Knight:** [sdknight@flinriverastronomy.org](mailto:sdknight@flinriverastronomy.org); Board of Directors: **David Ward:** [dward@flinriverastronomy.org](mailto:dward@flinriverastronomy.org); **John Wallace:** [JWCOSMOS@att.net](mailto:JWCOSMOS@att.net); and **Scott Hammonds:** [Scott@creatorsview.com](mailto:Scott@creatorsview.com); Public Observing Liaison, **Felix Luciano:** [Montbo2@yahoo.com](mailto:Montbo2@yahoo.com). Newsletter editor/ observing chairman, **Bill Warren:** (770)229-6108, 1212 Everee Inn Road, Griffin, GA 30224, [warren1212@mindspring.com](mailto:warren1212@mindspring.com); Webmaster, **David Ward** (see above); Alcor/Librarian, **Tom Moore:** [tmoore@dfiequipment.com](mailto:tmoore@dfiequipment.com); Event Photographer, **Doug Maxwell** (see above). Club mailing address: 1212 Everee Inn Road, Griffin, GA 30224. Web page: [www.flinriverastronomy.org](http://www.flinriverastronomy.org), discussion group at [FRAC@yahogroups.com](mailto:FRAC@yahogroups.com). Please notify **Bill Warren** if you have a change of address, telephone no. or e-mail provider.

\* \* \*

**Club Calendar.** **Tues., Feb. 24:** Futral Road Elementary School observing (6:30); **Thurs., Feb. 26<sup>th</sup>:** Flippen Elementary School observing (6:30); **Tues., Mar. 9:** Beaverbrook observing (following P.T.A. meeting, plan to set up behind the school at 7:15); **Thurs., Mar. 11:** FRAC meeting (Beaverbrook media center, 7:30); **Fri.-Sat., Mar. 12-13 and Fri.-Sat., Mar. 19-20:** Cox Field observings (at dark).

\* \* \*

**Outgoing President's Message.** Since this is my last President's Message for awhile, I was going to cover what was accomplished during my terms of office as your president, but **Bill** beat me to it in the "Special Edition" of the *Observer*. So here is what I hope happens in FRAC:

\*I would like to see more public observings.

\*I would like to see improved attendance at our club observings (and at meetings, too, I might add).

\*I would like to see us earning observing pins the way we used to. (Hopefully, I'll have my Herschel pin by the end of the year, so that will be my contribution to the cause.)

With the assistance of the officers and board members, I think we accomplished a lot in my time in office. **Georgia Sky View '04** is on track, and the registration rate is picking up, especially among out-of-staters.

FRAC has strong leadership, and further progress is inevitable. You can expect some more articles from me in the near future; I'm not going far, just hiding in the corner for awhile.

Thanks to all who supported me during the last 2-1/2 years. I hope you'll keep supporting me, because I still have a star party to run, y'know.

-Steve Knight

\* \* \*

**Editor's Message.** With our new slate of officers for 2004 in place, we have a lot of exciting events coming up: **Astronomy Day** on Sat., Apr. 24<sup>th</sup>; the American Cancer Society's "**Relay For Life Walk-A-Thon**" observing on Fri., Apr. 30<sup>th</sup>; and, of course, our **Georgia Sky View '04** star party on Fri.-Sun., May 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup>.

Re the latter: with not one, but *two*, bright (and possibly naked-eye) comets up in May, it's likely that GSV '04 will be a roaring success beyond anyone's imagination. Big events always attract thousands of newcomers to stargazing nationwide – as witness the leaps in telescope and binocular sales prior to such heralded celestial light shows as: the breakup and collision with **Jupiter** of **Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9** in 1994; **Comet Hyakutake** in 1995; **Comet Hale-**

**Bopp** in 1996; the **Leonids meteor showers** of recent years; and last summer's **Mars** encounter (see p. 5).

Such events also attract the attention of amateur astronomers who are eager to observe, discuss and compare their views with others. And since star parties are, by definition, dark-sky events, the combination of Ga. Sky View and the bright comets **C/2002 T7 (LINEAR)** and **C201 Q4 (NEAT)** in late May is likely to attract a larger crowd than our first-time star party status might otherwise lead us to expect.

**Steve** says that we've already reached the break-even point (i.e., where we can pay off the 2<sup>nd</sup> night's \$300 rental fee) and can now start paying back those who advanced us the \$300 down payment for the first night's rent.

Still, that doesn't mean we don't need your help, financial and otherwise, or that you can afford to put off registering until the last minute. The strength of any star party lies in the support of the host club's members.

At any rate, rest assured that FRAC's leadership is in capable hands. **Smitty** (president) is a good man, well-grounded in all phases of astronomy and a capable leader. (He served us well as president for 2 years from 1999-2001.) One of the things I hope **Smitty** will do as president is use his AAC ties to bring back speakers such as **Rich Jakiel, Art Russell, Jerry Armstrong** and **Phil Sacco**.

**Steve K.** will still be around as treasurer, of course, trying (probably unsuccessfully, given his girth) to hide in corners. **Larry Fallin** (vice president) is very good at everything he does, and **Doug Maxwell** (secretary) is, like **Betelgeuse**, a nova waiting to happen. This is his opportunity.

Beyond all else, what these fine gentlemen (and board members **David Ward, John Wallace** and **Scott Hammonds** as well) possess is a deep and abiding devotion to both astronomy and FRAC.

I know that many of you must get tired of my saying (at 160 decibels) that "FRAC is composed of nice people who genuinely like each other." Well, hey, folks, it's *true*, and I'm not talking about myself here, either. I'm talking about **Smitty, Larry, Doug, Steve, David, John, Scott** and others among you who, by your every action, reveal the sort of concern for

astronomy and your fellow members that makes FRAC special.

We've come a long way in the short span of seven years. As two of FRAC's founders, **Ken Walburn** and I are proud of the ways that FRAC has grown, and with such expanded leadership capabilities we're confident that that growth will continue for many years to come. We hope you'll continue to want to come along for the ride.

**-Bill Warren**

\* \* \*

**Membership Renewals Due in March: Tim & Celia Astin; Tracy & Haley Chambers; Larry & Veronica Fallin; Steven (Smitty) Smith; Ken Walburn; John Wallace; David Ward; and Jerry Williams.** Please send your \$15 check payable to FRAC c/o **Steve Knight** at his address on p. 1.

\* \* \*

**Last Month's Meeting/Activities.** **Smitty, John Wallace, Chuck Sims** and **yr. editor** observed at Cox Field on Jan. 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Our Beaverbrook PTA observing was clouded out.

We had 13 in attendance at our Feb. meeting:

**Steve & Dawn, Smitty, John Wallace, Lee Russell, Tim Astin, Chuck Sims, David Ward, Scott Hammonds, Bill Snyder, Doug Maxwell, Felix Luciano** and **yr. editor**, whose topic was "Getting Started in the Deep-Sky Binocular and Double Star Observing Clubs."

Officer elections were held, and **Smitty** was elected president, **Larry Fallin** vice president, **Doug Maxwell** secretary and **Steve Knight** treasurer. The 2004 Board of Directors consists of **David Ward** (reelected) and first-timers **John Wallace** and **Scott Hammonds**.

Our Feb. 20<sup>th</sup> Cox Field observing was clouded out.

\* \* \*

**Upcoming Meetings/Activities.** At **6:30 p.m.** on **Tues., Feb. 24<sup>th</sup>**, FRAC will conduct an observing for the 2<sup>nd</sup> graders at **Futral Road Elem. School** in Griffin. To get to the school from, say, Jonesboro, come S on U. S. Hwy. 19/41, take the Ga. Hwy. 16 (Newnan) exit and turn left. Stay on Hwy. 16 through Griffin, past Dairy Queen, Chick Fil-A, Burger King, 1<sup>st</sup> Baptist Church and Griffin-Spalding Regional Library (all on the right). After you pass the second Dairy Queen (also on the right), bear right at the green "Orchard Hill" sign; that road will take you down a steep hill and up a longer incline, after which the road curves left. As you enter the curve, Futral Road and a large church will be on your left; turn there, and the school is about ¼ mi. ahead on the right. (It lies diagonally opposite Spalding H. S. where we conducted an all-night "Relay For Life" observing in 2002.)

Futral Road teachers understand that, if the sky doesn't cooperate, we won't be there.

Two days later, at **6:30 p.m.** on **Thurs., Feb. 26<sup>th</sup>**, we'll conduct an observing for the 4<sup>th</sup> graders at **Flippen Elementary School**. To get to that school from, say, Griffin, take Ga. Hwy. 20 E from Hampton to I-75. Go N on I-75, and exit and bear right at the Jodeco Road/Flippen exit. Turn left at Peach Drive, the 1st road on your left past the 2<sup>nd</sup> stoplight). Go about ½ mi. and Flippen Elem. will be on your left. As with this month's two other school observings the rule is, *Don't come if the sky is clouded over.*

On **Tues., Mar. 9<sup>th</sup>**, we'll try again to hold a **Beaverbrook PTA observing**. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m., so try to get to the school and set up around **7:15**. We'll set up behind the trailers; to get there, drive toward BB along the main entrance road and bear right around the buildings.

Our club meeting will be at **7:30 p.m.** on **Thurs., Mar. 11<sup>th</sup>**. **Larry Fallin** and **Steve Knight** will talk about how to do a Messier marathon. Whether we'll also celebrate FRAC's seventh birthday with our customary refreshments remains to be seen.

Our Cox Field observings are scheduled for **Fri.-Sat., Mar. 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>**, and **Fri.-Sat., Mar. 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>**. The new moon will be on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

\* \* \*

**This 'n That.** From **Dawn Knight**: "For those who haven't seen it yet, take a look at the 'Coming Events' section on p. 103 of the Mar. '04 issue of *Astronomy*, where **Georgia Sky View** is listed. Yeah!"

\*From **Phil Sacco**: "Just for your info: If you are a member of the Astronomical League (*and everyone in FRAC is. -Ed.*), you can get an automatic 10% discount on any scientific or astronomical book in print." Consult the *Reflector* to find out how to order.

\*From **Larry Fallin**, #1: "There are two types of Chiefland (Fla.) observers: those who have dew systems, and those who will."

\*From **Larry Fallin**, #2 (regarding installing a Kendrick dew control system): "Like a Buckhead hooker...it's easy, but not cheap."

\*At our Feb. meeting, **Steve** showed us a 6" Newtonian Dob that has been donated to our star party by **Hardin Optical**, an Oregon-based company. Besides the 'scope, Hardin also donated two eyepieces, a Moon filter, 12 planispheres and 55 catalogs. (For a look at a Hardin telescope, see p. 21 of the March issue of *Sky & Telescope*. Although the 6" 'scope shown in the ad isn't the one we received, the quality is comparable.)

Hey, guys & gals, when it comes time for you to buy a new eyepiece or other astronomical equipment, *please give a thought to buying from Hardin*. Remember, these are the same folks who, a couple of years ago, donated **ten** free Moon filters to FRAC just because **Dawn Knight** wrote to them and asked for a few Hardin brochures for us to hand out to our members. It's difficult to imagine what else those fine folks might do to convince us that they want our business, unless it's naming us majority stockholders in the company.

\*Speaking of our star party, time is a-flyin', the **Georgia Sky View** is drawing closer, and if you haven't already done so you need to submit your registration fee to **Dawn**. (You can get a registration

form and information about fees at FRAC's web site, or by calling Dawn at [770]227-9871.)

The notice in *Astronomy* magazine has already begun attracting out-of-staters, and it would be a pity for any FRAC members to be left out of the fun due to late registration when the 75 registrant limit is reached. (Not to mention what a shame it would be for anyone in FRAC not to want to support our club in this most important financial venture FRAC has ever undertaken.)

At any rate, we can't say enough good things about the work that **Steve**, Dawn and the rest of the star party organizing committee are doing in preparing for this pivotal event in FRAC's history.

\*Finally, there is this from our "**Betcha Didn't Know**" Dept.: ***FRAC has a star named for it.***

Back in December, 1999, **Smitty's** wife **Deborah** gave him a rather unique Christmas gift: a *star* – or, at least, a star to be named for him. It was purchased through The Star Directory, a company that offers lovely certificates bearing desired (but unofficial) names for previously unnamed stars that buyers purchase, along with a star map showing where the star is located.

The company's brochure stated, "Each star is named only once by The Star Directory, and is then recorded in the book *Claiming Your Part of the Universe*, which is copyrighted and filed in the U.S. Copyright Office. Meant to be historically important *and not astronomically significant*, your star is the ultimate *novelty gift* designed for future generations to see and appreciate." (Emphases ours.)

Of course, this has nothing to do with the International Astronomical Union (I.A.U.) that oversees and controls the official naming of stars and other objects. Such unofficially named stars are copyrighted by the U. S. government, which has no control over the naming of the heavens. Still...it is listed as a historical reference and, as noted, it *is* a unique gift.

*What should I name my star?*, Smitty wondered. *I could put my own name on it – but that would be pretty arrogant and selfish. Anyway, I can always buy my own star later.*

*Should I name the star for my wife, son, parents or other people who are important to me or were a big influence on me at some point in my life? I can think of hundreds of people, places and things that have been a major part of my past.*

*Finally (he went on), I decided that this gift should benefit more people than just me. Therefore, I selected the name "FRAC – the Flint River Astronomy Club."*

*Now we all have a star (other than our Sun) that we can gaze upon and say, "That star has something to do with me." Of course, if by some remarkable chance we contact aliens from a world orbiting this star, I hope they don't mind the name I chose for it."*

Smitty never showed us where the **FRAC** star is located, or told us if he had located it. Perhaps he'll do so now that we've resurrected this small bit of FRAC history.

Such stars aren't always easy to find, since they tend to be of 11<sup>th</sup> magnitude and the finder charts they include with your certificate aren't always specific as to exactly where your star is located in the field of view.

In case you're interested in naming a star after yourself or someone else – well, we couldn't find The Star Directory on the computer, but we *did* find a number of star-naming groups who will be happy to separate you from a portion of your disposable income (usually, at a rate of about \$20-\$30 for a beautiful certificate, suitable for framing, attesting to your place in the universe): the International Star Registry <[www.starregistry.com](http://www.starregistry.com)>; Name A Star <[www.starnames.com](http://www.starnames.com)>; Celestial Registry <[www.celestialregistry.com](http://www.celestialregistry.com)>; and other sites such as <[www.nameastar.com](http://www.nameastar.com)>, <[www.starfoundation.net](http://www.starfoundation.net)>, <YourStar.com>, <[www.dedicateastar.com](http://www.dedicateastar.com)>, and <[gifts@starwishing.com](mailto:gifts@starwishing.com)>.

The astronomical community regards such commercial ventures as blatant scams, but that's true only if you're dissatisfied with what you get. And naming a star after someone *is* a quick and easy solution to the problem of what to get the person who has everything and is difficult to shop for.

\* \* \*

**The Sky in March.** From **Glenn Chaple** (*Astronomy*, March, 2004, p. 20): “Usually, the Sun hides many Messier objects from view (at sunset and sunrise). But during late March, “Old Sol” occupies a Messier-poor part of the sky, so Messier marathoners can take to the streets – er, sky. The magic date this year is **March 21...** (*We have a Cox Field observing on the 20<sup>th</sup>. –Ed.*)

“There’s a second mini-marathon we can enjoy this month – without optical aid. During the last week of March, **Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn** will be strewn across the ecliptic after sunset.”

\* \* \*

### Observing Report: Felix Luciano

Date/Location: Jan. 27, 2004, Jonesboro, GA.

Time: 6:45-7:55 p.m.

Temps: Low 30s with strong gusts of wind. Very cold.

Seeing: Skies clear and steady to the S and E. Light glow to the N and W. The Moon, 7 days old and roughly 75 degrees above the horizon.

Equipment: Orion XT8 Dob (f.l. 1200mm); 9x50 CIRA finder, Telrad

Eyepieces/Magnifications: 14 Rad (86x), 12 Rad (100x), 8 Rad (150x), 2x TeleVue Barlow

Binoculars: Oberwerk 11x70, photo tripod

**The Moon.** Located slightly to the left of (and above) **Mars**, and 25-30 degrees above **Venus**.

**Venus.** Venus, an extremely bright point of light, is holding steady at 171x and 200x, its phase just a bit over half. Will be behind a neighbor’s trees in about 20 min.

**Mars.** Holding steady at 171x and 200x. The views at 200x are surprisingly steady when the wind is not gusting. There is a very large, dark area (Syrtis Major) along the equator, stretching toward the western limb. There is also a very faint band to the east (Sinus Meridiani), more or less along the equator.

I am very pleased with this observation of Mars, and surprised at still being able to see some surface features and detail.

**Saturn.** At 171x and 200x, Saturn is also holding good, steady views. I am trying the following: at 200x I place Saturn at the edge of the eyepiece, then place my hands on the sides of my head, almost wrapping the eyepiece to block any light. Then I keep both eyes open while looking through the eyepiece. At times, the view is extremely sharp at 200x, and I can see shades of color on the planet.

\* \* \*

## MY NEW MEXICO SKIES ASTRONOMY

### ADVENTURE

article by **Scott Hammonds**

Sometime during April-May, 2003, several astrophotographers I know made a trip to the **New Mexico Skies Guest Observatory** (hereafter referred to as “NMS”) for two weeks of observing and photography. Having visited the NMS web site, I was anxious to hear of their adventure. Their glowing report and photographic images made my adrenaline flow. I quickly decided that this was the trip for me! I fired off an e-mail to **Lynn Rice** of NMS and confirmed my reservation for Oct. 23-26, 2003. I couldn’t wait to go, and it was only May!

After some pleading and the promise of a beach vacation next year, I convinced my wife **Alisa** to join me on the trip. (I also had to agree to daytime excursions around the local area, which at the time seemed like a good idea. More on that later.)

I had never before transported all of my astronomy gear via air travel, so I wasn’t quite sure how to handle that aspect of my trip. Lynn suggested that I ship a box or two of gear to NMS a few days prior to my arrival; she said it was a common practice among guests who travel by air. I thought it was a good idea, and planned accordingly. It allowed me to toss in a few jackets and sweatshirts for the chilly October

nights, as well as sending along as much of my gear as I could cram into a couple of boxes.

As October approached, I began to list all of the items I would need for observing, astrophotography, clothing, etc. I shipped two boxes to NMS, checked four bags at the airport and hand-carried my computer and 4" refractor onboard. Alisa carried one bag aboard. It was the most luggage I have taken on an airplane since I've been working for an airline. Surprisingly, everything arrived intact and on time.

We flew into El Paso, TX on Wed. evening, Oct. 22<sup>nd</sup>. We spent the night in El Paso, since our reservation for NMS was for Thurs., Oct. 23<sup>rd</sup>.

The drive from El Paso was only 1-1/2 hrs. to Alamogordo, N. M., which is about 45 min. from NMS. Alamogordo has a population of about 30,000, and has a Home Depot, Super WalMart and a number of popular eating establishments. You will need to stop and purchase groceries for your stay at NMS, because there isn't much to choose from after leaving Alamogordo.

The New Mexico Skies guest facility is located about 15 min. E of Cloudcroft, N. M., at an elevation of 7,300 ft. Cloudcroft is a nice little town with a few restaurants and a quaint tourist shopping area. My wife and I spent quite a bit of time there because cooking was not an option on this vacation. (That was another part of the deal I made with my wife.) The general store in Cloudcroft has a bakery with fresh bread and pastries, and the smell is inviting.

As I mentioned, NMS sits nicely at an elevation of 7,300 ft, and boasts a limiting visual magnitude of 7+ on good nights. The drive from Cloudcroft is exceptional during October, with beautiful color from the aspens mixed among the pines. Driving is not allowed after dark at NMS, and only red lights are permitted. All of the pathways from the office/library, living quarters, domes and observing areas are lined with small red lights. Working and walking at this elevation takes a little getting used to for flatlanders like me and Alisa. It wasn't bad, but we noticed the difference.

We arrived at around 3 p.m. and were greeted by Lynn and Bowser, the resident greyhound. After check-in, Lynn showed us to our room and then gave us a tour of the grounds. The accommodations and

equipment setup were first-rate, and it was a pleasure to work with Lynn and her husband **Mike**. We stayed in a one-bedroom apartment with kitchen, living room, bathroom and all of the conveniences of home, including satellite television. Kitchen utensils were included, and each room had red lighting to prevent you from ruining your night vision if you decide to take a break during the night. Too, the windows were darkened to allow white lights if you desire. The library was well stocked with books, magazines, star charts and computers. The computers were connected to the Internet via high-speed dsl and had The Sky software loaded. The library contained a telephone for outside calls. Each night around 10:30 Mike prepared cappuccino and hot coffee.

A number of telescopes for astrophotography or observing were available for rental during our stay. You can visit the web site for details on the 'scopes and cameras available. I chose the 6" Takahashi APO refractor mounted on a Paramount 1100 German equatorial mount. I also took my Televue NP-101 and Astro-Physics AP400GTO GEM. I was so pleased with the setup that I plan to use this combination again this coming year. Mike gave me a quick run-through on the computer setup controlling the mount and the SBIG STV autoguider before the first imaging session. Although I had never used the STV, it proved to be fairly simple for my purposes, and using The Sky software to control the mount was a dream.

The first two nights were spectacular! I couldn't believe how dark the sky was after sunset, and Lynn reminded me that it wasn't even past astronomical twilight yet! The Milky Way stretched nearly to the horizons on either side, with stars visible all the way down to those horizons. Even Alisa was impressed, and she doesn't care much for observing, especially in the cold. She was a real trooper, though, and spent several hours observing with me during the first two nights.

My notes from the first night went like this:

"Night 1 - Clear skies, seeing 6 (on a scale of 10), 50 degrees, wind 10 mph. Milky Way clear and bright, M31 very bright naked-eye. Up until 3:30, all imaging with no observing, Tak 150, NP 101."

I stayed up only till 3:30 because Alisa had a big day of sightseeing planned for Friday, and I was wiped out anyway. My imaging for that night was very successful with both 'scopes, but I made one mistake: I took only one 60-min. image of M31 and this turned out to be my only shot of it, but it is spectacular.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> night was equally nice, with only one short interruption of clouds. My notes read:

“Night 2 – Clear skies to start, 42 degrees, no wind, seeing 7 but deteriorating, clouds rolled in around 10 p.m. Started imaging, aligning, visual observing with Alisa, took nap around 11 p.m., back out around 1 a.m., sky completely cleared by 2 a.m. Imaged until 4:30, observed visually until 5:30 with Alisa.”

This was a great night for Alisa. She wanted to look through the 6” refractor, and although I didn’t want to remove my focused camera I wanted her to enjoy the views. (You know the rule: “*If she ain’t happy, you ain’t happy.*”) The Takahashi lived up to its reputation, and I gave Alisa a whirlwind tour of the night sky using The Sky software to slew the big ‘scope around. It was housed in a very nice dome for protection against the wind. I was able to keep my piggyback setup for astrophotography running while we observed with the Tak.

We spent Day 2 traveling around to some of the local sights and restaurants. I was beginning to run on empty, and agreeing to these daytime excursions was coming back to haunt me. We toured Sunspot National Solar Observatory and the Apache Point Observatory. Both of these are located about 45 min. from NMS and visitors are welcome. The Visitors Center with museum at Sunspot NSO is open every day, and some of its buildings were accessible for touring. Only the grounds were accessible at Apache Point. The elevation for this area was 9,350 ft.

My 3<sup>rd</sup> night at NMS was a bust for astronomy but provided some needed rest and a couple of inches of fresh snow on the ground the next morning. It also

gave me energy to spend the next day running around Ruidoso and Cloudcroft spending money. Ruidoso is a great little town about an hour from NMS and offers a lot of places for tourists to spend their money. Did I mention that we spent a lot of money?

I was excited about the last night because the forecast was for clear and cold. The front left clear skies but the seeing was a bit soft. The temps dropped into the high 20s, and that was enough to keep Alisa inside for the night. She entertained herself with football and reading while I imaged the night away. I finally shut down the ‘scope around 5 a.m. and started getting my things ready for the trip home.

Each night there were 15-20 guests observing or imaging. Most of them were in bed by around 3 a.m., but a few diehards made it through the nights. Everyone readily shared views in their ‘scopes, and I even got a few peeks through the 30” Tectron ‘scope.

The adventure was well worth the effort, worth the money, and definitely worth the time. Without a doubt, the skies were the best I have ever experienced, and I am looking forward to my next trip to New Mexico Skies!

\* \* \*

**Errata.** To correct a false impression that may have arisen in the Feb. *Observer*, we should point out that FRAC’s three co-founders in Jan., 1997, were **Larry Higgins, Bill Warren** and **Ken Walburn**.

##