



After Dark

The Official Publication of the
Catawba Valley Astronomy Club, Inc.

September 2007

Compiled by: Richard Michael



Welcome sign-

My husband and I left the morning of July 3rd for our trek to Green Bank, WV for the 4th annual Star Quest. After packing up wet camping gear in the rain for two years, I decided the short drive to a hotel would be the way to enjoy the Qu est, not as much fun as being on the camping grounds at night. Bill, my husband keep saying are you sure you don't want to camp, and I assured him that I didn't. .It rained all night the first two nights and I heard no more about camping.

Star Quest is a 4 day and night event held on the grounds of Green Bank National Radio Astronomy Observatory, Green Bank, West Virginia by the Central Appalachian Astronomy Club with the support of the Green Bank Staff. A great advantage for attending the Star Quest is the tour of the Jansky Lab that is not available to the general public and training with actual time on the 40 foot Telescope.

They have great camping sites, a bunk house that usually has spaces available and showers for the campers. Camper electrical hook ups available. There are great dark skies, the support that the staff gives is great, all windows are covered with paper or red film to block all light from the buildings and outside lights are turned out.

They have a great tour of the scopes, with an orientation before going, remember that if you want to take pictures around the scopes you will need to take a camera other than your digital camera. They cause static that interferes with the radio scopes.

This year the great lineup of keynote speakers included three of the original rocket boys. They were the students, of which the book *October Sky* and later a movie by the same name, supplied the material by actually experimenting with rocketry. They were very entertaining and impress on how important reading was; because all they accomplished was from knowledge they obtained by reading.

The second night's speaker was Robert F Royce speaking on Composite Mirror Technology and Dr Andrew Clegg speaking on Electromagnetic Spectrum Management. We had a busy day and decided not to attend this lecture. Comments from those that attended were very positive.

Friday night's speaker was Donald Nicholson, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Mount Wilson Observatory. He grew up as the son of an astronomer at the observatory. He spoke on the history of Mount Wilson Observatory and the renowned astronomers he knew and the quest to maintain this piece of history.

Saturday night speaker was Harold A McAlister. He is director of CHARA Project at Mount Wilson. He described the building and the working of CHARA Project. When my son and I were in California several years ago we went to Mount Wilson and saw this in being built.

In addition the keynote speakers there are speakers all during the day are lectures. This year's list included Introduction to Radio Astronomy, First Steps in Astrophotography, Webcam/DSLR imaging & Post Processing Techniques, Missing Mass -The search for Dark Matter, Next Generation Amateur Telescopes, Where Constellations?, Fire & Ice: NASA's missions to Mercury and Pluto, A brief history of Women in Astronomy, Tuning Up and Old Refractor Objective, Prometheus Bound: NASA's return mission to Mercury, and Missing Mass -The Search for Dark Matter. This year there was a Swap Meet. There are work shops for children, vendors for shopping and solar observing.

We did venture out during the day, went to Cass, WV, road one of the trains up to a replica of a lumbering camp. They are 11% grades and use switch backs to go up the mountain.



If your travels haven't taken you to Green Bank National Radio Astronomy Observatory, it is well worth the trip.



They have a replica of The Jansky Antenna used by Karl Jansky in the early 1930's.



The actual Radio Scope that Grote Reber built, with the welcome center in the background.

They have the Ewen-Purcell Horn, this the actual receiver used by Ewen and Purcell when they discovered a hydrogen line emission. There are six other scopes, one of these the 40 foot scope that is use for the education of teacher and students in radio astronomy.



The Robert C Byrd Green Bank Telescope is the primary scope. The tent camping area is in the field in front of the barn. I can show you pictures and tell you about the size, but until you see it yourself, you cannot imagine the magnitude.

Plans for the 5th annual Star Quest, it will be July 2nd –July 5th 2008.

For more information on the telescopes of Green Bank use web site www.gb.nrao.edu , down the left side your will see a title of GB Telescopes. You will get information on each scope.

I could go on for ever, because I really love going to this event each year and each year I learn something new. They have raffle prizes, some really great prizes. We didn't win anything t his year, but last year I won binoculars and Bill Edward, my son won a telescope, nebula pictures and a desk star map.

Barbara Barrier