

BPAA Newsletter

Battle Point Astronomical Association, Bainbridge Island, WA

ISSUE 65

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2004

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER-NOVEMBER CALENDAR

(Unless otherwise noted, all events are at the Edwin Ritchie Observatory, Battle Point Park)

September

September 1: BPAA Board Meeting 7 p.m.

September 6: Last-quarter Moon

September 8: Member Meeting 7 p.m.

September 11: Star Party Battle Point Park

Beginner Session 7 p.m.

September 14: New Moon

September 21: First-quarter Moon

September 22: Autumnal Equinox

September 28: Full Moon

October

October 6: BPAA Board Meeting 7 p.m.

Last-quarter Moon

October 9: Star Party Battle Point Park

Beginner Session 6 p.m.

October 13: Member Meeting 7 p.m.; New Moon

October 20: First-quarter Moon

October 21: Orionids Meteor Shower Peak

October 27: Total Lunar Eclipse; Full Moon

October 31: Daylight Savings Time ends

November

November 3: BPAA Board Meeting 7 p.m.

Taurids Meteor Shower Peak

November 5: Venus Passes 0.5 Degrees From Jupiter

Last-quarter Moon

November 6: Star Party Battle Point Park;

Beginner Session 5 p.m.

November 10: Member Meeting 7 p.m.

November 12: New Moon

November 19: First-quarter Moon

November 20: Edwin Hubble's 115th Birthday (1889)

November 26: Full Moon



Dave Warman and Paul Below at the Mt. Bachelor Star Party.
Photo by Russell Heglund.

Mt. Bachelor Star Party, page 4

CALENDAR NOTES

The long evenings of autumn will soon be here, providing extra hours of observing time. To take advantage of this seasonal bonus, we've scheduled fall star parties earlier: 6:00 p.m. in October and 5:00 p.m. in November.

The highlight of fall viewing should be the total lunar eclipse on October 27. Here in the Western U.S., the partial phase of the eclipse will begin shortly after sunset. The moon will rise low in the east. As totality begins, the sky will be getting dark and the Moon will be fairly high. Mid-eclipse will occur at 8:04 p.m. PDT, with totality ending at 8:45 p.m. The colors displayed may be varied and bright, depending on the weather. Let's hope for clear skies, as the eclipse will provide an excellent opportunity for both still and time-lapse photography.

There may be better than average meteor shower viewing this fall as well. In October, the annual Orionids meteor shower is predicted to put on a good show of perhaps 15 meteors per hour at the peak on October 21. The Taurids, which have a long duration (from October 12 to December 2 in the Northern Hemisphere), will peak on November three.

Remember that any member who plans to observe at any time can invite others to join in by sending an email to bpaa@yahoo.com. To join our email group, send an email with your name to bpaa-owner@yahoo.com and we can enroll you. If you want to also have web access to the messages and files, you can join the Yahoogroups by clicking the register link for new users on <http://groups.yahoo.com/>, and requesting to join our group on this page: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/bpaa/>. The system will send us a message, and we'll approve your request after we verify your membership.

Diane Colvin
BPAA Events Director
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IN BRIEF

President's Message

Paul Below

I hope you are enjoying the summer. I had a great time with eight other BPAA'ers at the Mt Bachelor star party in July, and hope to return next year. Laid back and uncrowded, no dust, dark sky, beautiful scenery, running water. What could be better?

On August 12, we had a special event for a group of Girl Scouts. About 30 Scouts were staying in the Park with some leaders. They walked over to the Observatory where we did a short outdoor session on how comets cause meteor showers. Although the previous night had been the peak of the Perseid meteor shower, a few stragglers can be seen for a week or so on either side of the peak and we hoped the girls would get a chance to see a meteor later that evening.

Then we went indoors, where Cathy Koehler and I did a night sky talk. Meanwhile, Diane Clouser took groups of scouts upstairs where Malcolm Saunders did dome tours. Outside, Russ Heglund, Nels Johansen and Bruce Muggli set up telescopes and when it got dark the young people got to see M13, the Ring Nebula, the

Dumbbell, and Alberio. Thanks to those that helped make the event a memorable one for the Scouts.

Speaking of the dome, I would like to recognize Nels for getting the dome exterior painted and restored to its white glory. It was long overdue, and he applied several coats of the special material that provides a waterproof seal.

In addition to our BPAA yahoogroup, where we continue to post club and local astronomy items, there is now a yahoo group for all Northwest astronomers, at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NW_Astronomers/.

To-Do Lists

Malcolm Saunders

Jobs to fit all skills and schedules. If any of the following tasks interest you, contact Malcolm at 780-1905 or saunders@drizzle.com for details.

☐ Thank you to Nels Johansen who put weather stripping on the door to the roof. With weather stripping, we hope to have solved the problem of leakage during heavy storms. This means we are now in a

position to repair the sheet rock in the stair well. Contact Nels Johansen and Matt Rothe if you are interested in helping on this.

□ There is a defective light socket on the ceiling of the main meeting room. This will be easy to fix but requires a very long step-ladder or fruit-picker's ladder.

Most of the items on the to-do list from the last newsletter still need attention. If you are interested contact Malcolm Saunders, Nels Johansen or Matt Rothe.

How's the Big Telescope?

The Ritchie telescope is in working order for visual use. The automatic "go-to" function has, so far, resisted fixing but otherwise the controls are working well. Club members wishing to learn how to use the telescope should contact Malcolm Saunders. Also, If you can help with taking care of the telescope please contact Malcolm. We have jobs available for both improving and maintaining the 'scope. A volunteer with electronic/software expertise would be particularly appreciated.

ARTICLES

Seeing Stars: Wizards? Astronomy 0.001

Anna Edmonds

What were astrologers like, a thousand years ago? Or alchemists? What's your image of medieval, oriental wizards?

This summer the Museum of the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, Turkey, hosted an exhibit entitled "Science and Technology in Islam." The exhibit came from the Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science at the University of Johannes Wolfgang Goethe in Frankfurt, Germany. Middle Easterners who lived from the 11th to the 16th century were represented in the exhibit with about fifty different examples of their works. Some were original manuscripts, but most were copies of the scientists' original instruments.

The display cases held text books and retorts, astrolabes and water clocks and mills—much of the equipment I'd expect a wizard to have used. But I didn't see any crystal balls, or smell any bubbling witches' brew. There were medical books with detailed anatomical drawings, and botanical texts illustrating the characteristics and uses of different flowers. Antique chemistry texts accompanied glass stills and retorts that looked

as if they could be from a modern research facility.

I found a touch of humor in a miniature copy of a watermill: Not only was its purpose to raise stagnant water, but the machinery was operated by the lowliest of Middle Eastern working animals, the donkey.

Two kinds of instruments were represented with a number of examples. The first were gold and brass astrolabes (mainly for finding the altitudes of celestial objects). The principle of the astrolabe is still used in equatorial mounts for telescopes. One of the first in the display was a 16" flat gold astrolabe made in 1629 for the Safavid ruler Abbas II.

Another gold astrolabe was from Toledo, Spain, made in 1029 during the time of the Moors. A

similar 15th century instrument, called an equatory, could be used to calculate celestial longitudes and latitudes. Still another kind, this one called a torquetum, was made in the 12th century by Jabir b. Allah. It could measure the three astronomical coordinates, horizon, equatorial, and ecliptic, and could show their relationships. The astrolabes were each a marvel of intricate and careful engraving. Not only were the network of circles and ellipses and the various tables finely drawn, but also the pieces were beautifully decorated with scrolls and arabesques and Arabic inscriptions. These were both



*Workers at the Taq ad Din Observatory, 1577.
From Sahinhah-nama.*

precision instruments and prized possessions that a man would have used and displayed with pride.

One of the better known Middle Eastern scientists, al-Biruni, was represented in the museum by two inventions. The first was a gold, 8" spherical astrolabe; the other was a device for determining the specific gravity of solid objects. A Persian scholar, al-Biruni lived from 973 to 1048 AD. He was knowledgeable in physics, mathematics, astronomy, geography, and history; he taught Greek and Arabic science and philosophy, and conducted experiments on astronomical phenomena. He is quoted as having said, "Just because only Allah is omniscient, that doesn't justify our ignorance." Among others of his time, al-Biruni helped lay the foundations of scientific research.

The second well-represented instrument was the clepsydra or water clock, that measured the passage of time by the flow of water. Clepsydras commonly measured the amount of time a lawyer could talk in court in ancient Greece and Rome. One colorful clock in the shape of an elephant was from the early 13th century. An earlier one, from the 12th century, was a balance that indicated the passage of minutes.

The most complicated clepsydra was made in the mid-13th century by another Middle Eastern scientist, Ridwan al-Sa'ati. It marked the full hours by opening a gate every hour -- balls dropped from the beaks of two birds into a sounding bowl. Quarter hours were marked

by a pointer that moved horizontally. A semicircular disk on the top had 12 holes, lit from inside, to show the hours at night.

The 14th century astronomer, Ibn al-Shatir, was represented by a copy of his sundial from the Omayyad Mosque in Damascus. Al-Shatir was the scholar whose models of the Moon and the motions of Mercury predated similar models by Copernicus.

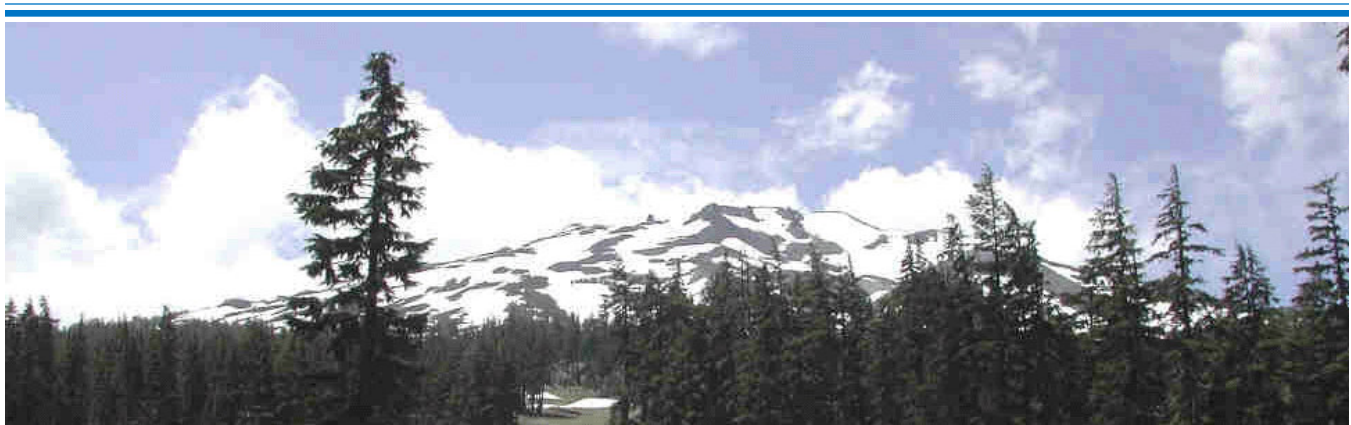
At the end of the exhibit, when I stopped to look back, what struck me was the quality of the work. Here were represented 600 years of complex and exacting workmanship and scholarship. The medieval, oriental wizards had crafted these things by hand, without the help of electricity, or controlled heat, or "clean rooms," or computer technology. How often did their work explode in their faces? How often was it laughed out of court? And what do we owe to them now?

References:

"Science and Technology in Islam," at the Topkapi Museum, Istanbul, 21 June-15 August 2004.

Paselk, Richard A., "The Torquetum" <http://www.humboldt.edu/~rap1/EarlySciInstSite/Instruments/Torquetum/Turq.html>

Saliba, George "Greek Astronomy and the Medieval Arabic Traditions," *American Scientist*, July-August 2002. <http://www.midtownreview.com>



Mt. Bachelor Star Party 2004

Diane Colvin

Last year we reported to you that the 2003 Mt. Bachelor Star Party had it all: no dust devils and no dirt, level sites for setting up, paved roads all the way to the venue, daytime activities galore including hiking and mountain biking, lots of room for vehicle and RV

parking near one's scope, heated restrooms with flush toilets, 110 outlets for battery charging, the opportunity to watch movies at night, nearby shopping, and a ski-lift ride to a gourmet restaurant with knock-out sunsets for before-viewing dining. And, yes, we did mention the most important feature of all: INK BLACK SKIES!

Mt. Bachelor. Photo by George McCullough.



Mt. Bachelor Lodge. Photo by Russell Heglund.

This year was the same and we even managed to discover yet another amenity: showers in Bend for a pittance, a mere \$1.25.

The one thing the Mt. Bachelor Star Party does not have is a guarantee of clear skies. But this is a lot to expect of any star party. Turns out seeing at the Table Mountain Star Party was marginal this year, and even at the Oregon Star Party, we were shut out for two nights straight.

We arrived early, as is our wont in our retirement years, on Tuesday, July 13. Registration did not officially open until noon on Thursday. Tuesday and Wednesday nights provided excellent viewing, on Thursday conditions were good, but both Friday and Saturday were dismal. We're convinced that for any star party any distance away from home, it pays to go early to widen the odds of clear skies sometime during your stay.

Last year at Mt. Bachelor we had just inaugurated our new 10" LX200 GPS telescope and CCD camera, a Starlight Xpress MX 916. We were new to imaging but managed to get some decent shots of a variety of Messier and NGC objects.

By this year our skills had improved. We spent most of our time imaging small, faint galaxies including PGC 34583 (Mag. 11.8), PGC 70925 (Mag. 15.5), NGC 5557 (Mag. 11.1), NGC 5676 (Mag. 10.9), and NGC 5689 (Mag. 11.9). We also managed to get a pretty neat shot of the comet du jour, Comet C/2001 Q4 (NEAT)

As was the case last year, the MBSP offered daytime and nighttime speakers. On Thursday Steve White of Televue gave an informative and practical talk on



*Comet c2001 Q4
NEAT
Mt. Bachelor
7/14/04
Photo by Harry
Colvin.*

optics, and then on Friday he fine-tuned and critiqued binoculars for attendees. On Friday, Bill McLaughlin, an imaging expert, lectured on basic electronic imaging. Richard Norton gave a talk on comets on Saturday night, followed by two NASA films.



*Beth McCullough, Harry and Diane Colvin.
Photo by George McCullough.*

One of the most remarkable things about Mt. Bachelor Star Party 2004 was the representation of BPAA membership. We had nine members there, Paul



*BPAA tents.
Photo by
Paul Below.*



Cathy Koehler reading in the upper parking lot, Brokentang in the background. Photo by Paul Below.

Below, Catherine Koehler, David Warman, George and Beth McCullough, Russ and Jody Heglund, Harry Colvin, and me. As a percentage, I'm sure we had the best club attendance for miles around.

Allow me to repeat myself from last year. Here's the bottom line on the Mt. Bachelor Star Party. Even if the weather's not perfect, the Mt.

Bachelor Star Party is worth going to. If it's clear, it's about all you could ask for: dark skies and creature comforts too. If it's not, there's a ton of other things to do in a beautiful and interesting locale. We recommend it highly, and will be back in 2005, early.



Sunspots, Mt Bachelor Star Party. ASA 400 film, prime focus, through a 8 inch SCT. Photo by Paul Below.

More on Mt. Bachelor...

Russell Heglund

Mt Bachelor is just 22 miles out of Bend, Oregon. It is a busy ski area in the winter....with all the amenities. The Lodge where the Star Party is located, is normally closed for the summer. They opened up the Lodge for food service and bathrooms for the Star Party. They even had an espresso bar in the Lodge at night! The weather was clear the first couple of nights. We could

see the Milky Way from horizon to horizon. We saw both comets (NEAT and LINEAR), and the space station made regular appearances. The last two days we saw only scattered stars, because of scattered clouds. The Star Party was put on by the Sunriver Nature Center Observatory. They offered several nature walks and talks (such as "Birds of Prey," "Snakes," and "Nocturnal Walks"), and did an excellent job of organizing the event.

The 2004 Oregon Star Party Clusters, Clouds and a Lucky Number

Harry Colvin

After review of the obligatory checklist, our journey to the Oregon Star Party from Bainbridge Island was on. We drove to Maupin, Oregon the first day. The City Park campground in Maupin was abuzz with river rafters coming and going. We were lucky to find a place without a reservation. This is a pleasant place to overnight on the way to OSP and we'd recommend it to all OSP attendees from this area.

The next morning we completed the trip to Indian Trail Spring, the site of the Oregon Star Party, arriving around 3:00 p.m. The site is about 50 miles east of Prineville on National Forest land at an altitude of

about 6,000 feet. It is an excellent dark sky site, albeit hot and dusty.

Monday night was clear, dark and warm with five-ten knots of wind from the north. The Milky Way ran from horizon to horizon, revealing rare detail. The Perseid meteor shower was making its appearance, with maximum activity due to occur early Thursday morning. By midnight I had the LX200 polar aligned and the MX916 CCD camera focused. Our observing goal for the week was to image galaxy groups as part of the Astronomical League's Galaxy Groups and Clusters program.

The program list includes clusters from Hickson's Compact Galaxy Groups, Abell Clusters, and other selected galaxy groups and clusters. The faintest galaxy we had imaged until now was magnitude 15.5. Many of these clusters have galaxies down to magnitude 18. We

were going deeper than I had ever attempted. We began with Stephan's Quintet in Pegasus, a well-known cluster that is often viewed with big Dobs. The group includes NGC galaxy objects 7320, 7318A, 7318B, 7319 and 7317. The faintest magnitude in the group is 14.0. After syncing the LX200 with Starry Night Pro and confirming that we had the cluster centered, we began a set of ten 3-minute images. In spite of the wind the tracking seemed to hold very well and when the first image appeared on the screen I was surprised at how much detail we were obtaining. Next we imaged Hickson 93 with galaxies down to magnitude 15.4. With the moon expected to rise around 2:00 a.m. we went after Hickson 94. This is a group of galaxies rarely observed and includes PGC 70939 at magnitude 17.8 and PGC 70941 at magnitude 18.0. Everything worked and 45 minutes later we had an image of six small galaxies down to magnitude 18.0. Around 3:00 a.m. the sky began to lighten up from the moon, but it had been a good first night finding and imaging our first galaxy clusters. We covered the scope and retired to the trailer.

Tuesday morning more people arrived, along with the crews to erect tents large and small. We got in the act and put up our sun canopy, an essential item in the 90-degree plus heat. Then came the infamous porta-potties in sufficient numbers for the expected 600 attendees. And later in the day, the espresso vendor arrived! The shower truck would not arrive until Thursday.

Tuesday night was a repeat of Monday night, clear and warm with five-ten knot winds. Imaging in wind is not easy but somehow the tracking kept up, so we continued to image Hickson clusters. Our CCD camera uses interlace technology for tracking, so only one half of the total imaging time is spent gathering photons for the image. Thus it takes 30 minutes to get 15 minutes of total image time. Because the sky was sufficiently dark I found that we could reduce this time down to 7.5 minutes and still get fairly good images. By 3:00 a.m. we had "bagged" nine more galaxy groups.

The official star party was not due to begin until Thursday, but by noon Wednesday it seemed that almost everyone had arrived. The early attendance was prob-

ably because of the Perseids. Wednesday night was again dark, warm, and windy. We spent most of the night imaging in various parts of the sky, bagging trios, clusters that contain three galaxies. We were working from a list of 50 from the Atlas of Compact Galaxy Trios. We imaged seven of these, and in between image



*Hickson 92 Stephan's Quintet
Oregon Star Party 8/9/04
Photo by Harry & Diane Colvin*

sequences, we watched the meteor show. And what a show! Around the peak at 2:00 a.m. over 100 per hour were raining down, many leaving long trails of luminescent smoke. It was a great night, but change was on the way.

On Thursday afternoon, several visits to the Internet truck to check the radar and the Cleardarksky clock confirmed that there was a weather front coming in from the south. Thursday night was a struggle, trying to find open holes in the clouds with sufficient time to

image. We had managed to image only three clusters by 2:00 a.m. Lack of sleep from three nights of tedious imaging was also taking its toll. Without thinking I issued a command to the telescope to slew instead of sync, misaligning the telescope. After a barrage of four letter words and several attempts to get an alignment star in the center of the chip, we called it a night.

Friday the clouds and rain moved in. At the swap meet that morning we sold our first telescope, a 6" Orion Dob. Since it was our first scope, it was hard to part with, but we finally decided we did not need three telescopes as much as we needed storage space.

Friday night turned out to be a total wash-out. We spent Saturday reviewing weather reports in the Internet truck and doing email. Door prize drawings were that afternoon and as usual we sat watching as the more lucky ones won eyepieces, books, and software. Hope was fading as they began drawing for the grand prize telescopes. "OK the next number is 62515." I looked down and could not believe it! There it was in my hand, number 62515! The shock of winning a big prize was tempered by the irony of just having relieved ourselves of one 6" scope, to now be going home with another.

Although Saturday night was another total wash, it was not a bad week. After all, we had won a 6" Sky Hunter Dob and had imaged 22 galaxy clusters.

THE METEOR— PART III

Gerald Elfendahl

(Continued from previous issue...)



... At 12:18 a.m., Monday, July 16, 1928, a meteor roared bright across the skies of Puget Sound. For five to seven seconds, night became day; explosions were heard; huge waves washed ashore near Harper and Manchester where dead fish floated ashore the next day. *The Seattle Times* and *P-I*'s first stories were told in Part I, other Monday and Tuesday stories were shared in Part II. Were meteorites found? Could the spectacular meteor become old news so quickly... *Seattle Times* readers heard, "Tacoma residents were quite sure that meteor-like fragments picked up on a fairway of the Tacoma Country and Golf Club were from the astral caller though positive identification was held impossible by Prof. F. A. McMillan, head of the geology department at the College of Puget Sound (CPS), to whom specimens were submitted." (McMillan pointed out that 15,000 to 20,000 meteorites daily reach the atmosphere but that most "burn to dust" before reaching earth.)

The Tacoma News Tribune's reporters may have dug deeper—or stretched the story— when they boldly announced, "Meteor Pieces Found— Belief That Sky Visitor Exploded Over or Near Tacoma Grows." The prevalent thinking was that large parts of the meteor exploded before impact and showered the region with fragments. Did any survive? *Tribune* reports from the professor did not dismiss the idea.

"Several fused fragments were found on the golf course of the Tacoma Country & Golf Club on Monday by Lee Johnson Jr. and it is believed they may be fragments from the exploded meteor. An investigation by Prof. F. A. McMillan of the CPS disclosed the formation to be iron and rock mass that had been subjected to intense heat, such as might be cast off by the meteor explosion."

"That the flashing meteor resembled a huge sky rocket and blew up while still 40 miles from Tacoma is the belief of C. W. Taylor, 1498 Stevens St. who, Tuesday, gave the most complete picture of the phenomenon to date. Taylor was walking home when he was attracted to the strange light. He soon spotted the falling star and watched it for several seconds. As it approached the earth...it suddenly exploded, he said, sending a shower of particles downward, just like an exploding sky-rocket.... In the mass were several large sections,

surrounded by innumerable sparks. Taylor continued his walk and had gone a block and a quarter before the explosion was heard. He estimated the elapsed time at two minutes and from his calculations, he estimated that the meteor was 40 miles away ...when it burst. The low rumbling noise following the explosion, Taylor believes was made by the meteor as it zipped its way through the earth's atmosphere before it exploded. The fact that the explosion was heard first would be explained by the fact that the meteor was probably traveling faster than the speed of sound waves."

"Residents of the north end of Vashon Island told of a great splashing noise and high waves pounding the beach shortly after the meteor flashed. Dead fish were also seen on the beach leading to the theory that the main body of the meteor may have fallen in the Sound just west of the northern tip of Vashon. This theory was borne out by Capt. Domingo Scarponi of the ferry *Tacoma*. The boat was just pulling into the Point Defiance slip when the meteor passed over. Capt. Scarponi watched it and was of the opinion that it burst somewhere over the West (Colvos) Passage and its remains crashed into the water there."

A *Seattle Star* Tuesday editorial, "Something About Meteors," presented readers with a primer on shooting stars and "...what must have been a huge chunk of some forgotten world, long ago blasted into space." Editors urged all to keep an eye out for the annual August meteor shower suggesting, "You will find the speculation it arouses a refreshing relief from the humdrum cares of this little world."

Ho, hum...but in Tacoma, "The most thrilling spectacle ever witnessed in the PNW" grabbed headlines and was greeted by 20,000 people on Wednesday morning. It touched down with a roar at Tacoma's Airport. It was no meteor: It was The National Air Tour— twenty-one planes, motors screaming at top speed and piloted by some of the day's most famous aviators.

In a "Special to Wednesday's *Seattle Times*," Elmar White of Lynden, WA, told a vivid story. He saw the meteor at about 12:15 a.m. Monday morning from the "sudden lighting of the sky." He saw the "blazing trail of fire moving toward the southwest. The object seemed to be traveling slowly. No earth disturbances were noticed."

In another Wednesday *Times*' story, two Bellingham residents said they saw the meteor Monday morning. Harbormaster Art Hook saw it from Eliza Island. C. L. Taylor, a taxicab driver, reported seeing it at 12:20 a.m.

while taking a passenger to Mt. Vernon. He was “in the vicinity of Sunset” and his impression was that the brilliant meteor fell near Edison. He judged it traveled ten miles across the sky, just above the horizon. He said, “It looked like an airplane with its gasoline tank afire.”

By Friday, the weekly *Kitsap County Herald* repeated the *P-I*'s story to Peninsula and Bainbridge Island farmers and steamboat passengers under the banner, “Meteor Falls Into Sound.” The Vashon Island News Report, a farm newspaper occupied with more earthly matters, made no mention of meteorites in their island soils or waters. No copies of the *Port Orchard Independent* or *Bainbridge Island Review* survive — or do they?— to record sightings from their vantage points.

Rev. Dr. H. S. Templeton addressed his University Presbyterian Church congregation at 11 a.m., Sunday, July 22 with a sermon entitled, “God’s Reminder in the Sky— The Message of the Meteorite.” He described the phenomenon and suggested “...The suddenness and brightness of the meteorite are timely reminders of a coming event in the earth’s history. The return of the Son of Man...”

The next day, a week after the meteor impact, a forest fire erupted along the south shore of Bainbridge Island between the Country Club and Fort Ward. It was across from Manchester and Blake Island where some had reported a meteor splash down. The fire made the news a week later. Its cause was unknown. Was it started by smoldering meteorite fragments?



Forest fire, Pacific Northwest

The meteor fell past the bedtimes of 1928 south Bainbridge residents Jack Klamm, 9, of Pleasant Beach and Elmer Anderson, 14, of Toe Jam Hill. Both had early morning chores. “In those days,” Anderson says “most farmers would not have paid much attention to meteors.”

Both remember the forest fire that raged on the high, steep, windy hills above the south shore. It threatened forests, several homes and, to the west, the gravest danger— Fort Ward’s ammunition magazine.

Upwards of 500 volunteers helped contain the fire including Seattle’s fire boat *Snoqualmie* and sailors from battleships *California* and *West Virginia*. Its cause was unknown.

Anderson recalls, “It raged for days and almost destroyed our

farm. It started to the east above South Beach and the DeStieger’s place. He contacted sailors in Bremerton. If it hadn’t been for the sailors, I don’t know what the fire would have done! There was no Toe Jam Hill Road down the steep hill to South Beach then, and few homes. Mr. DeGroot had logged and there was a lot of old growth. Sailors came right away— still had their blues on— and with pick and shovels, cut a fire trail along the east side of Fort Ward. Then they ignited a ten-acre back fire. That shut it off. They done real good! I don’t ever remember any other fires like that.”

Gerald Elfendahl is a lifetime resident of Puget Sound, a local historian and author of an environmental history and geomorphology of Bainbridge Island. He can be reached at gelfenda@earthlink.net.

Editor’s Note

Vicki Saunders

This is the fourth BPAA Newsletter I’ve edited. I’ve enjoyed working with the club’s enthusiastic, capable, and tolerant writers. I’d like to hear from more of you. Share your astronomical passions with your club. This is your publication. You don’t need to be expert, just

interested. We’re seeking material for all levels of astronomers, from beginner on up. Members can contribute to ‘In Brief’—about 200-500 words; write full-blown articles—about 1000-1500 words; or send astronomical pictures with captions. Email me, saunders@drizzle.com, with questions or contributions, but be sure to put ‘BPAA Newsletter’ in the subject line, so your submission doesn’t get lost in the spam.

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