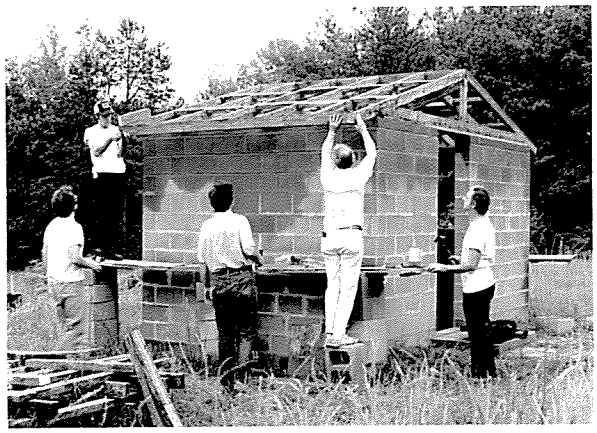
THE ATLANTA OBSERVER'S NOTEBOOK

-prepared for the members of the Atlanta Astronomy Club-

Volume 9 September 1978 Number 1

WALTER F BARBER JR. OBSERVATORY UPDATE

Hi club memgers! You are missing out on a good thing. We have a remote sky observing site: the Walter F Barber Jr. Observatory. It is availsble to everyone to go look at the sky and renew acquaintance with the stars and the cosmos. You can go as a group, organized and conducted by our Observing Chairman Bill Arnold, or you can go as an individual. You need only ask for the combination to the gate lock. Bring an extension cord if you want to use the electricity.



8/5/78 work crew, David Speering, Mark Christensen, George Reight, Ray DuVarney, and Lee Wilson preparing to put roof on the warm-up building. Photo by author using Panatomic-X film, B/W print by Leonard Abbey.

-lee

One reason I am reminding you of this sky-gazing goodie is that the place doesn't look as though enough footsteps have been there this summer to flatten a tenth of a percent of the weeds. A clean-up detail is needed. Mr. Barber has hinted to me that if we will clean up the rubble and pick up the loose rocks he knows of a power of mankind that can stunt the growth of any weed at 2 to 3 inches.

We have something that we didn't have before, a good dark sky observing site along with some basic needs such as electricity and concrete observing pads, and there is promise of much more than that. Good progress has been made on construction of the two buildings, but we are a long way from the instellation of good,working, telescopes. We have a 16" mirror that was donated to the club by Bill and Anna Bell Close and a 20" mirror that was given to the club this last June by Mr. Tom Statchard of Philadelphia. A very good open-frame tube came with that gift. Some preliminary checking of the 20" by Mark Christensen indicates a very good parabola and a focal length of about F/4. This short focal length means that we should be able to install this Newtonian into our Observatory.

Having told you something about the telescope parts we have I must now tell you about the many pieces of equipment that we

don't have by using some direct quotes from Mark Christensen.

> "The 16 & 20" will need a diagonal, diagonal mount, focusing mount, mirror mount, and finder. Estimated cost for each set of these items is about $300.00. By way of a mount, we shall need two large flange bearings (say 2 to 3") for the declination axis, as well as some 2 or 3 inch shafting. A fork must be cast and hence we must make a pattern. A pair of large (3½ to 4") pillow blocks are needed for the hour angle axis as well as 3 to 4 feet of shafting to fit. The basic mount as described above will cost about $500.00. The major expenses will be the setting circles and the gears. A good pair of 10" setting circles will cost about $250.00 per pair, unless we make them ourselves (not at all out of the question). As for the gears: we can use a tangent arm drive, such as Wolf sells for this (cost: approx. $200.00). The real pistol will be the Right Ascension gearing. As I mentioned to you Beyers is no longer making gears for amateurs. A 15" worm is in order for the 20 and perhaps a 12" for the 16. It will be very time consuming to make one. There is a possibility that we can find some fellow amateurs who can do this. However, we should still expect to pay the going rate for it; it's an awful lot of work. Indeed, the clutch assembly will be as much work as the gear itself (I speak from experience!). Figure $1,500.00 to $2,000.00 for a worm and clutch."

Some of the telescope parts that we need are long lead time items. Up-front money is needed before these parts can be ordered and that brings up another item that we don't have. Money. One item we do have is luck and good fortune. In the past year and a half we have accomplished things that didn't seem possible. The reason we have accomplished them is because some members thought about what we wanted and talked about what we needed and then went out and did it. The purpose of this article is to identify and describe some of the things we still need so that we can think about them and talk about them and make something happen.

The development of a club observatory with working telescopes is a function that belongs to the whole club, not the elected officers and one or two especially appointed persons. At present we don't have an appointed observatory development chairman. However, as anyone knows voluntary work has to have some guidance. In the past year and a half I have made the 40 mile drive out to the observatory site many times. So in the face of that reality and after some discussion at the August planning meeting I have volunteered as a member who can be called on for guidance. Since a variety of technical knowledge is required two other people who have given liberally of their time, Mark Christensen and David Speering, are joining me in this effort. You can call us observatory program directors, advisers, or whatever. Speaking for myself, an official title doesn't interest me. The only reward I'm interested in is the satisfaction of seeing the project completed.

-Lee Wilson

REPORT ON THE 1978 SERAL CONVENTION

This June was a busy travel month for some of us with both the regional and national Astronomical League convention being held in the same month and in opposite directions from Atlanta. It totaled about 13 hours of flight time and covered some 2600 miles starting in mid-June with a trip to Cocoa Beach, Florida and ending the month with a trip to Madison, Wisconsin.

The South East Region Astronomical League (SERAL) convention was hosted by the Brevard Astronomical Society at Cocoa Beach on June 15, 16, and 17th. Flying down with me were Tut and Debbie Campbell, Jerry Armstrong, and John Rizzo. Also in attendence from The Atlanta Astronomy Club were Bill and Anna Belle Close, George Roberts, and Lee Wilson.

We spent much of the three days attending the paper sessions which covered a wide range of subjects including astro-photography, grazes, and the Space Shuttle program. Two side trips of interest were to the Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral and to Astronaut Memorial Hall in Cocoa for a planetarium program on constellations and star names.

New regional officers elected at the business meeting on Saturday afternoon were: Chuck Cole (Orlando) Chairman, Tom Stanley (Atlanta) Vice-chairman, Patricia Rogers (Jacksonville) Secretary, Larry Loper (Merritt Island) Treasurer, and Tut Campbell (Atlanta) Regional Representative (a three year office). Tut, along with Jerry Armstrong, also received an award at the banquet for their excellent exhibit on astro-photography.

A big disappointment was that only a total of 55 people, out of more than 1000 in the region, attented the convention and about half of the clubs had no representatives at all. Atlanta is currently being considered as the site of the 1979 regional convention. Our fairly central location within the region and being a large active club are certainly assets. We have a lot of talent in our club and I think we could put some of it to use by accepting the offer to be hosts of next year's convention.

The people making the flight with me to the national convention in Madison were: David Speering, Tut and Debbie Campbell, and John Rizzo. George Roberts drove up in his pick-up. Tut Campbell accompanied George on the return trip through Philadelphia to pick up the 20" from Mr. Tom Statchard.

- Tom Stanley

AON Staff-
Lee Wilson
Emily Boland
Billie Ann Rice

AAC Officers: President David Speering
1st. V.Pres. Eugene Powell
2nd. V.Pres. Bill Arnold
Rec. Sec. Jody Watts
Cor. Sec. Leonard Abbey
Treas. Doug Slaseman