



West Valley Astronomy Club

Monthly Meeting Minutes

December 3, 2024

Meeting: Beardsley Recreation Center - 12755 W Beardsley Rd, Sun City West, AZ 85375 - #4 Agave Room

Board Members and Volunteers Present: Bob Randle (President), Paul Bleikamp (Vice President), Bob Colvert (Treasurer), John Hiatt (Program Director and Library Telescope Coordinator), Larry Matney (Outreach Director), Josh Burtrom (Star Party Coordinator), Bud and Betsy Johnson (Secretary), along with volunteers, club members, and visitors **(Total Present: 48)**.

1 - Opening Remarks: This meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by President Bob Randle. Tonight is the club's Holiday potluck; everyone brought delicious hors d'oeuvres or desserts, which were enjoyed during the meeting.

2 – Tonight's Speakers: Four club members gave presentations:

Milton Lachman gave a recap of how our yearly calendar evolved through the years and how December 25 became the official date for Christmas. Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem to pay taxes, and Mary gave birth to Jesus. An angel, in the form of a star (Polaris), led the 3 Wise Men there to honor Jesus. The Christmas star and angel both represent Christ's birth; people decorate the tops of Christmas trees with either an angel or a star (not a UFO!).

Bob Colvert spoke about his trip to McDonald Observatory in Texas. He and his wife visited 3 telescopes: the Hobby-Eberly scope, which can observe 71-81% of the sky and studies dark energy, etc.; the H.J. Smith scope (the one that was shot 7 times in its primary mirror in 1970), which studies the composition of stars and is used in the search for exoplanets; and the Otto Struve scope, used for geodetic observation, studying Earth's shape, which changes over time. Bob also spoke of Saturn's rings--not good to view now because of the planet's tilt, but good views will be back in 2027.

Larry Matney did a presentation on Solar Imaging in October for the Astrophotography meeting. Tonight he brought more slides of his imaging work for viewing the sun with his solar telescope. He uses a sun shield, which rejects excessive energy, to protect the scope, and we got to see great views of the sun's surface and edges. He used inverted imaging on some of his work, which brings out more detail. Of 2000 frames he takes, he saves 200. He said to check out Mark Johnston on YouTube for some good images, too. The best time to do imaging is early morning, and you have to keep tracking. He also mentioned that for safety precautions, do NOT use a finder scope.

Lana Slinkard reported on the trip to check out Lowell Observatory's new additions. She and Sandy went to the Open Air Observatory on the roof; it was cold, but the seats were heated. At 7 pm the scopes were turned on. Fees are: \$35 for entry, the Theater is \$10 extra, and nighttime observations start at \$7. If it's an overnight trip, the hotel fee is about \$130. A trip in March may be to the Mirror Lab in Tucson, plus Kitt Peak. Also, on January 22, NatGeo will present work by an astrophotographer at Mesa Art Center. Tickets are \$38 to \$56. More info on that at the Jan. meeting.

3 – Other Business: President Bob opened the floor for board position nominations for next year; none given, so those present voted by raising hands to keep the present board members. Bob then opened the bidding for the telescopes, which were all donated since November: Meade ETX-60 AT – final bid \$85; Celestron 114 4.5" Firstscope –final bid \$20; Meade 8" LX10 –final bid \$328; Celestron 11" CPC 1100 –final bid \$1000. Tonight's raffle prizes were map sets from the SciTech Festival, night sky playing cards, books, a calendar, & a video. Larry Matney gave a short report on the once-a-year Sci Tech Festival in Surprise on November 16. This year there were 3 solar scopes, robotics, drones, 3D printing, & 735 in attendance. Larry encouraged members to come, even if you don't bring a scope. Be sure to check out the WVAC Outreach website for upcoming programs. Club members are welcome, and it is free to the public. If the weather is bad, Larry will notify the club of cancellation. The Peoria librarian sent a thank-you note for the last Outreach program there.

4 – 50-50 Prizes: Debbie Bleikamp had 3 prizes for those who bought tickets.

5 – Future Meetings: The next meeting will be on Tuesday, January 7, 2025, at 7:00 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm. Minutes submitted by Bud and Betsy Johnson via email on December 4, 2024.

Minutes approved by: _____ Date _____

Bob Randle (WVAC President)