

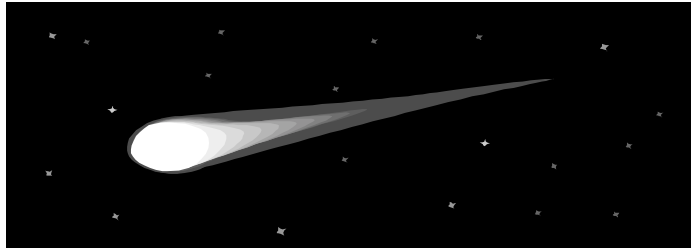
# Northwest Skies



The Official Newsletter of the Tacoma Astronomical Society  
Tacoma, Washington, U. S. A.

*72 Years of Amateur Astronomy in the Northwest*

*March - April, 2003*



## The President's Message

*By Matt Flood*

This being my first article as the new T.A.S. president I'd like to pass on my greeting to all past presidents and future members. A lot of truly fine people have preceded me (most recently Dick Mossey) to make this club the special group that it is. Not only past presidents, but board members, club members and friends who work so hard to keep the club going. I have certainly enjoyed my years in the club and shall be proud to carry on the tradition as your president.

Speaking of tradition, I'm please to announce that the TAS general meetings will be moving back to UPS as of April 1st, when Steve Starkovich of PLU will be our guest speaker. Our two-month period at Pierce will be over and our 73-year tradition at UPS will be back on track. Due to the good work of our own Bert Brown and the staff of UPS; TAS has been named an official school club, which waves our rental fee on Thomson Hall. Due to the loss of Pettinger-Guiley observatory, this news from UPS is most welcome. After this status was obtained, the advisory vote at the general meeting on February 4th was unanimous in wishing to return to UPS. The board of trustees followed that up with a unanimous formal vote on February

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18th. So back home we go, with hope for many more good years. Please take the time to thank Bert and any of the staff you know at UPS. We now will have two great schools to work with, UPS and Pierce College.

Speaking of Pierce College, three interesting things have happened recently which will be beneficial to the club. Firstly, the first public night at Pierce College on January 25th came together without any major problems, except the weather. It rained and rained and rained. Still, several hardy souls came out to try to make a go of it. We had more members than public. Alice Few put on her comet show with the intro by Bill Reynolds (no wonder it rained). Several people brought scopes, which we set up in the classroom next to the lecture area for a nice "Show and Tell" session. Viewing itself was washed out. The public was sparse, but this gave us a chance to start out small and get geared up for bigger crowds later.

Secondly, the Pierce College student newspaper, *The Pioneer*, February 13th issue, wrote a nice article about TAS at Pierce College.

*Continued on Page 4*

# Coming Events

- March 4<sup>th</sup>: **General Member Meeting**, 7:30pm  
Pierce College, Lecture Theatre 320.  
Guest Speaker: Paul Hinds
- March 8<sup>th</sup>: **Public Night**, Pierce College. 7:30pm  
Moon Talk and observing if weather is permitting.
- March 15<sup>th</sup>: **Star Party**, 7:30pm  
Des Moines Parks & Recreation Field House, 1000 South 220th Street.
- March 18<sup>th</sup>: **Astronomy Presentation**, 4:15pm  
Federal Way Girl Scout
- Board of Trustees Meeting**, 7:30pm  
Ken Slavens house, 5112 88th St. Ct. E.
- March 22<sup>nd</sup>: **Public Night**, Pierce College. 7:30pm  
Moon Talk and observing if weather is permitting.
- March 28<sup>th</sup>: **Youth Group**, Pierce College, 7:30pm
- April 1<sup>st</sup>: **General Member Meeting**, 7:30pm  
University of Puget Sound.
- April 5<sup>th</sup>: **Public Night**, Pierce College. 7:30pm  
Scale of the Solar System interactive program and observing if weather is permitting.
- April 26<sup>th</sup>: **Public Night**, Pierce College. 7:30pm  
Scale of the Solar System interactive program and observing if weather is permitting.

Check for new events on the Tacoma Astronomical Website Event Calendar.

# PEOPLE TO CONTACT

## PRESIDENT

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## Treasurer's Address for New Subscriptions and Renewals:

**Jerry Armstrong**  
1728 South Fernside Drive  
Tacoma, WA 98465

## HELP USING YOUR EQUIPMENT

The current listing of Tacoma Astronomical Society volunteers is given below. If you need assistance or advice regarding astronomical equipment such as questions regarding operating or purchasing a telescope these volunteers can help. Please remember that they are unpaid volunteers and limit your calls to the hours between 7 and 9 PM. If you wish to become a TAS volunteer, please contact Sion Heaney.

Al George (253) 531-1171  
Dave Armstrong (425) 277-2175

*Northwest Skies* is the bi-monthly publication of the Tacoma Astronomical Society. All opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Tacoma Astronomical Society. Personal advertising is accepted without charge from members in good standing. Article contributions are encouraged and may be submitted as an email attachment to the Editor in any format at [editor@tas-online.org](mailto:editor@tas-online.org). Please add a short biographical note stating any particular area of interest within astronomy or any other relevant information.

The Tacoma Astronomical Society Web Page can be found at:

<http://www.tas-online.org>



The Nobel Prizes in Science are awarded each Fall by the Royal Swedish Academy of Science, in the fields of Physics, Chemistry and Medicine. There are also awards in Literature and, in recent years, for Economics. The Nobel Peace Prize is awarded by the Norwegian Nobel Committee. The originator of these prizes was Alfred Nobel, 1833-1896, Swedish industrialist and inventor of dynamite. There is a monetary award, now at \$1 million for each prize; although prizes are often shared.

You will notice the absence of 'Astronomy' in the listing of sciences honored by the prizes. Thus people like Henry Norris Russell and E. Hertzsprung (who developed the "H-R diagrams"), Edwin Hubble, and a galaxy of others are not Nobel winners. However, prizes have been awarded in Physics at times for discoveries relating to Astronomy, especially in recent years. Of course, since Physics is the study of the world around us, and the world is one of the planets, one might say that all Physics awards are about Astronomy. But I shall list below the physics awards most closely connected with Astronomy, the year given is that of the award, not the scientific work.

- 1936 Victor Hess, discovery of cosmic rays; and Carl D. Anderson, discovery of the positron, first anti-particle (in cosmic ray tracks.)
- 1948 P.M.S. Blackett, development of the Wilson Cloud Chamber (which had been invented by C.T.R. Wilson in 1907); used in cosmic ray studies.
- 1960 Donald Glaser, invented bubble chamber, successor to cloud chamber. 1967--Hans Bethe, theory of nuclear reactions, energy production in stars.
- 1974 Antony Hewish, discovery of pulsars; and Sir Martin Ryle, inventions and observations in radio astronomy.
- 1978 Arno Penzias and Robert W. Wilson, discovery of cosmic microwave background.

1983 S. Chandrasekhar, theory of internal structure and evolution of stars; and William A. Fowler, theory and experiments of nuclear reactions relating to formation of chemical elements in the universe.

1993 R.A. Hulse and Joseph Taylor, discovery of a new type of pulsar.

1995 Martin L. Perl, discovery of tau lepton (a kind of neutrino); and Frederick Reines, detection of neutrinos. Reines' partner, Clyde Cowan, had died before he could be awarded a prize; Reines' and Cowan's work was done around 1956. Neutrinos pervade the universe, and their behavior (or lack of it) has been studied intensively in recent years.

Now the 2002 Nobel prizes have been awarded to three scientists for achievements in studies of neutrinos and cosmic X-ray sources, topics which have been discussed earlier in these columns. Raymond Davis, Jr. did early work in detection of neutrinos and measurement of the flux of these elusive particles from the sun; and Masatoshi Koshiba at the Kamiokande project in Japan obtained evidence that neutrinos can change 'flavors' (types) in flight, thus accounting for an apparent deficiency of solar neutrinos. Riccardo Giacconi made pioneering contributions to astrophysics which have led to the discovery of cosmic X-ray sources. The Swedish Academy, in its infinite wisdom awarded half the money, \$500,000, to Giacconi and divided the other half between Davis and Koshiba. But the honors are not divided, one does not speak of a 'half-' or 'quarter-' Nobel winner.

Northwest Skies articles on neutrinos appeared in a series of five columns, November 1998 through March 1999; and in a follow-up article in the March-April 2002 issue. We had one column on X-rays, March 1998, but it focused on the surprising discovery of X-rays from comets. Perhaps a later column can be devoted to the achievements of Dr. Giacconi.

*Bert Brown has taught physics and astronomy at the University of Puget Sound for about 23 years. He has Physics Degrees from Washington State University, Caltech and his Doctorate from Oregon State University.*

*Continued from Page 1*

The article outlined our public nights and other activities at Pierce. We may get some interest from their students as a result of the article. Pierce College has been most helpful in getting us off the ground at Public Nights. Our next public night is February 22nd at 7:30 PM.

Thirdly, miracle of miracles! The hilltop viewing site is completed. Bulldozing, gravel and compacting, all done. It is going to be a great place to view from. A little 'yard work' will give us plenty of set up area. The loop road is wide enough to park for unloading, and still have room to drive around. Very nice work by Pierce College at some expense to them. I am confident that our relationship to Pierce College will be mutually beneficial. We get a great viewing site, and access to their classrooms and they get our expertise and man power to build public programs. These public programs will help Pierce College obtain grants for their science center and desired observatory.

Finally, Sion Heaney has done a wonderful job on getting our new website, TAS-Online.org, up and running. He is adding new functions all the time. This newsletter will be posted online for anyone to view, members or web-surfers. Our benefit from this should be decreased costs to produce Northwest Skies as only non-internet members should receive hard copies. Thanks, Sion!

Bye for now, and Clear Skies,

***Matt Flood***

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## Important Message Regarding the Northwest Skies Newsletter

As Northwest Skies is now available for download from the TAS-Online.org website we will only be mailing the newsletter to current members who do not have Internet access. This edition of the newsletter will be the last edition mailed out to the current mailing list which includes members with and without Internet access. We are currently in the process of building a new mailing list of those members without Internet access. This notice is intended for those folk only.

If you are a current member of Tacoma Astronomical Society and **you do not have Internet access** please contact the number below before April 24th 2003 to be kept on the mailing list.

Tami Heaney, Information Officer  
(253) 460 - 0599

By providing your name and address you will remain on the mailing list. TAS very much appreciates those who have agreed to download the newsletter as they are each contributing towards the savings the Society will make and helping fund other important programs such as TAS Outreach.

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## SNACKS FOR THE GENERAL MEETINGS



The following good people have volunteered to bring cookies or other snacks to our upcoming meetings:

### **March 4<sup>th</sup> General Meeting**

Glen Andker and Richard & Jill Carrier, Sr.

### **April 1<sup>st</sup> General Meeting**

David P. Howes and Bert Brown

Thanks everyone for making our meetings more enjoyable.

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## New Members

Please welcome our newest members as voted into the Tacoma Astronomical Society at the February 18th Board Meeting.

**Ruston Cable**  
**Janet Byrd**

Welcome all! For your name badge and/or Members Handbook please contact the Information Officer, Tami Heaney, or email [information@tas-online.org](mailto:information@tas-online.org).

# *General Meeting Minutes*

*Joan Koch, Secretary*

**January 1st, 2003**

## **TAS General Membership Meeting**

President Matt Flood called the meeting to order and introduced three new board members: Bill Briggs, Dave Sherrod and George Hiles.

### Old Business

- Reminder that Membership dues are due by March 15th.
- TAS now has a post office box and everyone is encouraged to send their mail to Jerry Armstrong at the post office box. The address is Tacoma Astronomical Society, PO Box 8881, Tacoma, WA 98418. Jerry can be reached at (253) 565-7874.
- Past President Dick Mossy passed out one, two, three and four year pins that were not picked up at the Christmas Party in December.
- The February 2003 general meeting will be held at Pierce College. Speakers for future meetings are:

February: Bernie Bates from UPS.  
March: Paul Hines from Pierce College.  
April: Steve Starkovich from PLU.

- Matt Flood announced there will be a special board meeting to be held at his home on January 13, 2003.
- On January 18, 2003, there will be a members Public Night, a trial run at the new facility. All members are encouraged to come.
- The next Board of Trustees meeting will be held on January 21, 2003 at Matt Flood's house.
- The Student meeting will be held on January 24, 2003 at 7:00 pm at the Real Life Family Center.
- Our first Public Night at Pierce College will be held on January 25, 2003.
- Bert Brown brought up that UPS was considering making TAS an official University Sponsored group. This would give us our meeting room at no charge to the club. Bert said that he would keep us informed as things developed.

### New Business

- The fact that our budget may be extremely tight was discussed. It was brought up that 60% of our yearly revenue comes from dues and 40% came from PGO. It was suggested that an increase in dues might help to make up some of our potentially lost revenue.
- Pierce College. We will be moving our public nights to Pierce College beginning with the January 25, 2003 public night. A discussion ensued regarding whether or not to move our general meetings out to Pierce College. The student meetings will be moving out there and the public nights will be held at Pierce, so a discussion about the general meetings took place. It was decided after some debate that the board would discuss the matter further after the January 18, 2003 trial run public night and once the members had an opportunity to view the facilities. The board would then make present it's recommendations to the general membership at the February General Meeting.
- Matt Flood showed digital pictures to the membership of the facilities at Pierce College. These pictures and video included the area, and the meeting rooms/class rooms available to us. Matt also told us that we will be listed in the Pierce College news letter as well as the quarterly class schedule listings.
- It was suggested that we have only one public night per month until we see how things will go.

### Outreach

- Ken Slavens said that he had received a call from a teacher at Frontier Elementary School in Graham. They want us to do a star party on January 17, 2003. Ken said he would put the details up on the TAS List. Ken also said there was a home school group of about 200 interested in a star party. It was suggested that we invite them to a public night.

### Show and Tell

- Nate showed off his brand new Orion XT10 Dobsonian telescope. He said Santa was very good to him this year.
- Chuck showed off his new Coronado scope for viewing the sun.

- John displayed his eyepiece holders made of wood. He had several that he was no longer using for sale.
- Bill Briggs brought some photos he made from negatives from the Southern Sky Observatory in the Andes Mountains of Chili.

**February 4th 2003  
TAS General Membership Meeting**

The meeting was called to order by President, Matt Flood.

- Sion Heaney gave a demonstration and update on the webpage. "Phase One" is almost complete. The newsletter is now online in Adobe Format. Adobe is a free downloadable program enabling everyone, regardless of their operating system on their computer, to view the newsletter. For those with no Internet access, there will still be a mailed newsletter. The new mailed newsletter will eventually be in color. The event calendar is up and running, as is the bulletin board. Email addresses for the officers, outreach, etc. are also working.
- Matt Flood talked about the club equipment, what we have, what needs to be worked on and who has it.
- Matt also brought to the club's attention an article in the 1/29/03 TNT about TAS going to Pierce College along with pictures from our first public night there.
- The on-going discussion as to where to hold the regular membership meeting was brought up. We discussed the pros and cons of both locations. Matt informed us that Pierce College has no problem with us continuing to hold our meetings at UPS. The board discussed the subject at our last board meeting and was swayed by the long history the club has with UPS. It was also pointed out that the UPS facility has been very generous about helping out with programs.
- An advisory vote was taken and the membership voted to continue to have our general meetings at UPS. The next general meeting will, however, be held at Pierce College.

Outreach

- Ken Slavens made the following announcements:

2/8/03 7:30 pm there will be a star party at Des Moines, weather permitting.

2/16/03 2:00 pm with be an Outreach Training program for anyone interested in getting involved with the outreach program. The meeting will be held at Pierce College in the Sunrise Building, Room 118.

2/27/03 7:00 pm. Meeker Elementary School will be holding a science fair. This is in downtown Puyallup and will be weather permitting.

- There will also be an Astronomy Day for the public at Sea Tac Mall. The tentative date is May 24, beginning at 10:00 a.m. This will be a strictly indoor presentation. Volunteers are needed to help with demonstrations, etc.
- Anyone interested in any of the above, can contact Ken Slavens, by telephone or email, or via the Outreach link on the new webpage.

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**TAS-Online.org**

**Phase One of the Tacoma Astronomical Society Website**

By Sion Heaney

It's has been very pleasurable receiving so many complements on the usability and design of the Tacoma Astronomical Society's website, [www.tas-online.org](http://www.tas-online.org). Thank you all for the emails I received and the words of praise I've heard in the meetings. It's good to know that you're all enjoying the website and are making good use of it.

I'm happy to say that all but a few finishing touches are required to consider that 'Phase One' is complete. I describe Phase One as being the basic functionality to make the website useful to our members and visitors alike. From the outset I wanted a website that was more than just static web pages of text as one sees in so many other websites. Whereas, it is important to have the necessary information readily available on our web pages it would also fall very short of what we could be doing with our online presence. In my presentation to

the Board of Trustees mid-January and then later in the February General Members Meeting I outlined the three key areas of functionality that are included in Phase One. I'd like to describe them here once more for those who may have missed my presentation.

#### Northwest Skies Newsletter Online

One of the key reasons for creating a functional website was to provide a means of distributing the newsletter at a significantly reduced cost. My first printing and mailing of the newsletter showed that with our current membership the costs for an entire year would be a significant percentage of the annual budget, impacting other programs and needs. Allowing the newsletter be published to the website as a downloadable Acrobat document would allow us to make considerable savings and would more than pay for the annual cost of the website itself. This estimate was based on the high probability that 90% or more of our members were online. The newsletter is published online as an Adobe Acrobat document. To get the free Acrobat Reader simply click on the Get Acrobat link at the bottom of the Newsletter web page.

*Please also read the notice regarding the continued mailing of newsletter for those folk without Internet access on page 4.*

#### TAS Bulletin Board

For sometime now we have relied on the list server, TAS-List, as an expedient means of communicating over the Internet. The process is simple enough, once registered, your email messages sent to TAS-List are distributed to everyone else registered to the same TAS-List. However, this is not without it flaws and problems. Email addresses change overtime so email messages sent from TAS-List can get lost or bounce back. Also, there is no organization of conversation threads, past and present. The TAS Bulletin Board provides considerably more features than the TAS-List. Again, once registered, you can post messages but they are posted on the web page. The bulletin board is organized into topics within forums within categories. You can format your messages with various text styles and 'emoticons', and edit or delete your own messages after they are posted and, being web-based, you can check on the bulletin board wherever you find a web browser. Furthermore, if you want to receive email notification of when messages have been posted to the bulletin board you can

subscribe to any topic. This feature should greatly help alert out regular participants of Starwatches, which can often be called at short notice. Finally, the TAS Bulletin Board is administered by our own Webmaster (*Ed: who's that then?*) rather than a third party such as Yahoo Groups. No more spam and no more pop-up advertisements!

To register on the TAS Bulletin Board simply click on the Register link in the top right of the web page. You'll need to fill in the form with your current email address. Shortly afterwards you'll receive a confirmation email which will require you to confirm your email address to complete the registration. Once done you'll be ready to start posting messages.

#### Email Addresses

The third key piece of functionality is the introduction of individual email accounts for key roles or offices. Instead of having to use their own personal email accounts, those members of the board and other club members who perform key roles in the society now have email addresses that reflect the role they are representing. These new email addresses are much simpler to recall and make contacting the correct individual via email much easier, for instance; [president@tas-online.org](mailto:president@tas-online.org) and [outreach@tas-online.org](mailto:outreach@tas-online.org). All the new email accounts have been posted up on the website in the Contact Us web page. In this way, although the individuals holding that particular office or role may change the email by which to contact them will always be consistent.

With the completion of Phase One I will be monitoring, tweaking and stabilizing the website prior to starting plans for Phase Two. Already I have received a number of suggestions and I am incorporating those together with some new features of my own that should keep our website 'sticky' not only for our current members but also for prospective new members.

As this is your website I'm always looking for ideas, suggestions and relevant content to add to the site. Please let me know if you think of something or if you'd like some additional web pages added.

Enjoy!

# March 2003

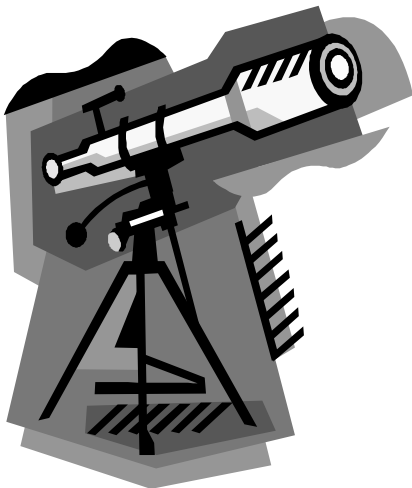
Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
1	2 New Moon	3	4 General Meeting 7:30PM Pierce Col.	5	6	7
8 Public Night 7:30PM Pierce Col.	9	10	11 First Quarter	12	13	14
15 Star Party 7:30PM Des Moines	16	17	18 Board of Trustees Meeting 7:30 PM	19	20	21
22 Public Night 7:30PM Pierce Col.	23	24 Last Quarter	25	26	27	28 Youth Group. 7:30PM Pierce Col.
29	30	31				

# April 2003

Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
			1 General Meeting 7:30PM UPS	2	3	4
5 Public Night 7:30PM Pierce Col.	6	7	8	9 First Quarter	10	11
12	13	14	15 Board of Trustees Meeting 7:30 PM	16 Full Moon	17	18
19	20	21	22	23 Last Quarter	24	25
26 Public Night 7:30PM Pierce Col.	27	28	29	30		

## Northwest Skies

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**FIRST CLASS**