THE DENVER OBSERVER



Newsletter of the DENVER ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

One Mile Nearer the Stars

DAS OFFICERS

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

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DAS URL; http://www.denverastro.org

The Executive Board conducts the business of the DAS at 8:00 pm at Chamberlin Observatory: please see schedule for day of meeting. Everyone, and their input, is invited. SCHEDULE

Number XI, November, 2000

Volume XLVIII.

November 3 – Friday -- E-Board Meeting @ 8:00 pm. November 4 – Saturday -- Dusk.; Public Open House. Topic: "How to Buy a Telescope." November 10 – Friday -- General Meeting at Olin Hall, D.U. Campus, beginning at 7:30 p.m. Nominating Committee chosen. November 11 – Saturday -- Work Day at Chamberlin. November 23 – Thursday -- Work Day at Chamberlin. November 23 – Thursday -- LOCAL STAR PARTY. Please see p 6.

December 1 – **Friday --** E-Board Meeting @ 8:00 pm. **December 2** – **Saturday --** Dusk.; Public Open House. Topic: "How to Buy a Telescope."

<u>December 9 – Saturday -- Annual Holiday Potluck Party @</u> 7:00 pm, Chamberlin Observatory. See p 2.

December 16 – Saturday -- Work Day at Chamberlin. **December 23 – Saturday --** LOCAL STAR PARTY. Please see p 6.

Happy Holidays, Everyone!

*** Chamberlin Observatory; Mirror Grinding Class starts at 10:30 a.m. Please see p. 2 for schedule. ***

SKY & TELESCOPE sends only one notice before your subscription ends. Remember, the cost of this, and the other magazines, is over and above our yearly dues. The DAS sends only one issue of The Denver Observer after your dues run out. Also, for questions concerning new memberships, renewal memberships, address changes, and magazine subscriptions, please contact DAS Treasurer Chuck Carlson (chcarlso@du.edu). Send in your money, with the renewal form on the back page to; DAS Treasurer, Chuck Carlson, 1521 South Vine St., Denver, CO 80210-2835 We are bidding a sad farewell to Pat Ryan. Pat has made major contributions to the club during his time here. He has served as the developer and Web Master for the Web page, Secretary and has edited, written and produced the Newsletter. You can tell how valuable someone is when it takes three people to replace him. Terry Chatterton will maintain the web page, Patty Kurtz with publish the newsletter, and Ron Pearson will fill in as Secretary. We all salute Pat for his contributions to making the DAS the fine organization that it is. We wish him well in the future and hope you maintain contact with the members. We all wish clear skies to our colleague and friend.

The list serve is getting into some new things such as chat rooms. If you have suggestions as to who you might like to chat with please get in touch with Patti Kurtz. I have already suggested Galileo. Patti has had trouble contacting him. If anyone has his email address please let her know. I tried heleocentric.com but he has apparently moved

If you have any questions call me at (303) 986-5255 or email me at Lbrooks100@aol.com Larry Brooks

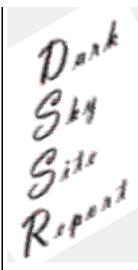
Mirror-Grinding Classes

The schedule for mirror-grinding classes is as follows: Nov 11, 25; Dec. 9, 23. These are at 10:30 AM. Please call Terry Chatterton at 303-621-2442.

Astronomy classes at the University of Denver: All levels of instruction available at Chamberlin and Mt. Evans Observatories. For current schedule, contact Dr. Bob Stencel (303-871-2135); rstencel@du.edu; www.du.edu/~rstencel) and/or the DU Registrar's Office (303-871-2284).

LEARN TO OBSERVE VARIABLE STARS

If you are ready to go beyond sight-seeing with your telescope, now you can learn how to observe and report variable star magnitudes. DU will offer free variable star observing classes this fall at Chamberlin Observatory. Please email rstencel@du.edu to sign up for further info. If you would like to preview the subject, visit the AAVSO website at www.aavso.org. --Prof. Stencel, Director, DU Observatories.



We raised about \$1,700 for the Dark Sky Site at the auction. Many of the sellers were donating 100% of their proceeds to the club. That put us over the top for the most money ever raised at the auction. We will be moving soon on the warming hut and hoping to put in a vault toilet next spring or summer.

ANNUAL HOLIDAY POTLUCK 7 p.m., December 9, 2000 Chamberlin Observatory

It's a potluck dinner, and you know what that means!! means YOU bring the hotdish, casserole, salad, dessert, whatever! We will also need some hotplates as well, so bring 'em if you got 'em. Come celebrate the Holiday Season with all of your DAS friends and chums! You may remember that for the past couple of years, we've been able to hold the Potluck at George Jones' facilities. With his departure to the East Coast, we have been unable to find another facility in which to hold the potluck, so we are holding it at Chamberlin. If, however, you DO have a place, other then Chamberlin, please notify our president, Larry Brooks at LBrooks100@aol.com, no later then November 20!!!

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Just wanted to post a couple of warnings about driving to the Deer Trail Dark Sky Site based on experiences Sunday night.

Since road 34 has been paved all the way to 241, it is tempting to drive fast, even at night. An older couple who are neighbors of ours at the Dark Sky Site drove over a blind hill about 2 miles west of the road 241 intersection and ran into a heard of black cows grazing on the road. Even with his high beams on, by the time he saw them it was too late to stop. The car was totaled and three cows are dead, but fortunately the air bags worked and the couple was not severely injured (a lot of lacerations, maybe a broken wrist, but nothing permanent). Also, if you see an accident out there, please stop to help.

Also note that the dirt road leading to the site (241) was washed out in spots between 34 and the DSS after the heavy rains they experienced in the recent past. I don't know how quickly they repair the roads out there.

Greg Marino

<u>A First Timer's Visit to the Okie-Tex Star</u> <u>Party</u> by Sandy Shaw

Mars rose above the ridge like a tiny sparkling ball of red fire in the cool pre-dawn September sky. All was quiet as I covered my scope and stowed my charts. No red lights flashed, no voices murmured, no shadowy figures moved; everyone else was asleep after yet another night of nearperfect observing at Okie-Tex 2000.

Just a few days earlier, I had traveled from Denver under ominous gray skies with intermittent blasts of snow. My fears that I would need a seasoned team of acclimated winter campers to aid me at a potential sub-freezing tent site dissolved as I crossed the Oklahoma border to beautiful blue, clear skies.

Camp Billy Joe, a youth camp near Kenton in the Oklahoma panhandle, was the site for the Okie-Tex Star Party sponsored by the Oklahoma City Astronomy Club. The camp is situated in a double-branched box canyon that opens out into a wide field covered with vegetation. Weeds had been mowed, creating lots of level dust-free camping and observing space.

After pitching my tent on a bit of prime real estate in the larger canyon, I explored the facilities. A community building was to be the focus of organized activity. It housed the kitchen, dining and lecture area, with vendors arrayed inside around its perimeter. It also contained the girls' and boys' shower rooms, reminders that we were in a kids' camp; that shower room became my welcoming ally in enduring the hot, dry days to come. Several nearby bunkhouses offered simple beds on a first-come, firstserved basis. After observing the creaky metal frames sardined so tightly together that next-bunk neighbors would be an alarmingly short distance away, I was glad to have opted for a campsite.

As the deep blue curtain of night drew across the sky that first evening, the afternoon's gusty winds settled down, leaving perfect observing weather – warm, still, and cloudfree. Arcturus twinkled low in the west as the Summer Triangle shone overhead in the darkening sky. Shortly before the official white lights out time of 9:00 p.m., a stentorian male voice reverberated through the camp: "Lights out – seven minutes!" That voice and that announcement were to become very familiar over the next six nights.

Astronomical twilight faded away, revealing a truly awesome dark sky. Objects that I had never seen naked eye before were finally visible; deep sky objects that were supposed to be difficult were fairly easy to see. One of my current observing programs is the Herschel 400, a list so riddled with wads of faint stuff that it carries various cautions and hints for enhancing the visibility of dim objects. It may be tricky to see all of those objects with my 8-inch Dob; finding really dark observing sites is going to be the critical factor in this project. A description for one of the galaxies on the list, NGC 185, states that it is "extremely elusive... Use averted vision for this ghostly image, a real challenge to see." But at Okie-Tex, the dark, dark sky enabled me to find it easily and see it right away with direct vision! Only twice before have I observed under a sky as dark as that of Camp Billy Joe.

Six of the seven nights had clear observing weather. On the one cloudy night, sucker holes triumphed after only two observations. Fortunately, the bad weather night had been scheduled for midweek, allowing recuperation from sleep deficit.

Coyotes serenaded us most nights, their wild voices echoing across the mesas. Singing of timeless travels, their harmonies flowed through me as I witnessed the elegant ballet of the night sky. M4, a translucent cottonball in the dusky sky, slipped silently past the hill, pulling Antares behind it like a red-orange July 4th sparkler. M6 and M7, both delicate puffs of stardust visible in the same binocular field, slid away through a notch between pinyon pines. A thin silver crescent Moon rested for a moment atop the wooded ridge before its plunge beyond the horizon. On the opposite side of the celestial stage, the bluewhite stars of the Pleiades glided into view, followed by their entourage of Saturn and Jupiter. My binoculars picked out the ensemble players as well; the tiny dots of Uranus and Neptune as their precisely measured steps carried them just a bit farther west every evening.

The intoxication of that sky kept me up until past

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3:00am. the first night, but sleeping late the next day was easy and pleasant in the cool before noon. At Camp Billy Joe, in-tent roasting didn't begin until early afternoon.

Just about noon, a ringing rusty dinner bell called us to the community building for the first in a series of hearty meals. By the end of the week we were conditioned like Pavlov's dogs; even before the bell would ring, lines of us were trekking faithfully to the dining hall at the appointed times. The food was variable in quality. It ranged from some best-forgotten overcooked meat and underseasoned vegetables to delicacies such as tender roast turkey, lovely lunchtime garlicky potatoes, lightly spiced chocolate cake, and cinnamon-scented pumpkin-pecan pie. The barbecued brisket and smoked sausage on the last night were a culinary highlight; the tantalizing scent of the slow-cooking beef wafted through the camp all day, promising – and delivering - a great dinner. On the delectability scale, I'd rate the food as 7 out of 10 and on the value scale as 9 out of 10.

To recuperate from the late nights, a necessary daily pastime was dozing under a makeshift shade canopy loosely knotted to my car's roof, when the intense flapping from strong breezes wasn't too noisy. It was a small victory that my flimsy fabric roof stayed up the whole week with only minor reinforcements of duct tape – my personal best record for tarp stamina at star parties. My neighbors later told me they knew the afternoon gusts had begun when my tarp began flapping loudly, then theirs successively flapped one by one as the wind moved down the row of shelters like "the wave" in a stadium full of overly enthusiastic sports fans.

During one particularly windy day even earplugs couldn't keep out the noisy flapping, so I was gazing idly at ravens flying when my neighbor spotted two strange pink birds on the surrounding rocky hillside. Reaching for my binoculars, I focused just in time to see two furtive figures high on the ridge positioning a pair of pink plastic flamingoes. They had liberated the rosy waterfowl from the décor of a friend's campsite and relocated them far from their natural habitat to the amusement of those watching from below.

Astronomers with excess energy found plenty to do on those hot, dry afternoons. Within the camp you can walk past cholla cactus and prickly pear to climb past stands of oak trees up to Flamingo Ridge and Southern Cross Hill for great views of the surrounding volcanic mesas. Just a mile away, a museum in Kenton displays a wide variety of local artifacts. Only a few miles away you can see a trackway of sauropod footprints in a creek bed and/or hike eight miles to the highest point in Oklahoma atop Black Mesa. An archaeoastronomy site, Crack Cave, is about an hour's drive away in Picture Canyon in Colorado. One caution about visiting the site; take either a topo map or someone who's been there if you want to avoid meandering aimlessly through the dusty canyons. The Oklahoma City Astronomy Club supplied several interesting speakers to the star party. The knowledgeable duo of the Kenton Mercantile owner and our own chief camp cook spoke about local history and points of interest. A space artist created one of his paintings in only one hour using some unusual airbrush techniques and color palettes. A third speaker presented intriguing ideas about pseudoscience and offered suggestions about how amateur astronomers can counter it. A CCD photographer showed "comet movies" – images of comets moving against background star fields.

Wandering about the observing field at night provided diversion from my quest for the Herschel 400. Huge Dobsonians were strategically placed about the site, accompanied by dauntingly tall ladders to tempt those brave enough to venture into the rarefied heights. I wasn't; balancing on rickety ladders in the dark is not one of my talents. Although I was persuaded to climb one small ladder for some excellent views, I almost needed Sherpa assistance to ascend those few steps. (Thanks, J!)

On the final night, the star party's organizers gave us a great sendoff. After a satisfying barbecue dinner came the famed Okie-Tex giveaway. It began with a door prize drawing just for children, thoughtfully arranged so that each kid won two or three things. One lucky girl won a six-inch sky-blue Dob and was afterward appointed to draw the tickets for adult prizes. Four out of the seven of us DAS attendees won something, logically proving that the chances of any of us winning next year are a little over 57%. Or not! Once again the evening sky was clear. While using that chance to nab a few more faint fuzzies, a familiar figure stopped to say goodbye. The president of the Oklahoma City Astronomy Club was making the rounds, thanking everyone for coming to the club's party.

Leaving the seductive soft red-lighted universe for the harsh world of glaring white lights is always a wrench; this time it seemed even harder after a whole beautiful week. Tapping out this story on my computer, my thoughts drift back to those clear nights and glorious skies. I wonder how soon I can send in my registration for next year.

If You Go to Okie-Tex 2001

Okie-Tex 2001 is scheduled for October 14th through 21st, again at Camp Billy Joe in the Oklahoma panhandle. The camp is approximately 350 miles from Denver, about a six-hour drive. One possible route is east on I-70 to Limon, then south on U.S. 287 to Boise City, OK, and finally west on state highway 325 about 40 miles to the site. The entrance into the camp is about ½ mile east of Kenton, Oklahoma. The camp is on Central Time. This year early registration was \$30.00 per person with price breaks for additional family members; late registration was \$50.00.

Supplies are available at the Kenton Mercantile, about 1 mile from the camp, or in Boise City. This year, meals

could be prepaid for any combination of lunches and dinners at \$7.00 each; menus were sent out ahead of time to those on the mailing list. Some observers made excursions into Clayton, NM for lunch.

The terrain is level and suitable for either tent or RV camping, but be aware there are no hookups. Bunks are available for the gregarious adventurer. Days can get hot and nights cold; this year the afternoons reached the high 80s, and the nights the mid 30s. Bring plenty of hand lotion to fight the extremely dry air. This year there was a state-wide ban on open fires, so I couldn't use my Svea campstove to make the tea that keeps me warm during those cold observing nights; next year I'm taking an electric kettle. And, of course, it's BYOF (bring your own flamingo)!

Check the website at www.okie-tex.com/ for updated information; email questions to starpartyinfo@okie-tex. com Snail mail address is P.O. Box 128, Mustang, OK 73064. Telephone numbers are 405-350-3108 and 405-722-1678.

DMNS Astronomy Program

Here is a relaxed, informal and fun way to learn astronomy. During the day attend lectures given by noted astronomers, or participate in family games, crafts, and other activities. Or take a break and hike among the pines in the beautiful setting of Mt. Evans Outdoor Lab near Evergreen. At night listen to stories and view the full moon, Saturn, Jupiter, Venus and Mars through our 18 inch telescope. Bring a 35 mm camera with a removable lense and take pictures of the moon. This is a program for families and adults. The fee includes lectures, activities, meals and dormitory style lodging. The program runs from 11:00 Saturday November 11 to 1:00 p.m. Sunday November 12. Adult member cost \$125.00, adult nonmembers cost \$135.00, children members cost \$75.00 children nonmembers cost \$85.00. If you have questions about the program, please call Jill Graham of the Denver Museum of Nature and Science at 303-370-6156 or email jgraham@dmns.org.

Who Ya' Gonna Call ...?

The E-Board, that's who! Do you have a problem or question or issue to bring before the governing body of the Denver Astronomical Society? Then please don't hesitate to contact your Executive Board. How do you do that? Just read on...

Your President, Larry Brooks, can be contacted at (303) 986-5255 or email at Lbrooks100@aol.com Your Vice President, Ed Kline, can be contacted at (303) 758-6953. Ed handles, among other things, the speakers for our General Meetings.

Your Treasurer, Chuck Carlson, can be contacted at (303) 744-7331 or email at chcarlso@du.edu. As Treasurer, Chuck is responsible for membership dues and for the member database. If you move, or are not getting the newsletter, you contact Chuck.

Ron Pearson is the acting Secretary. He handles Board Meeting minutes. You may contact him via email at rpearson@ecentral.com

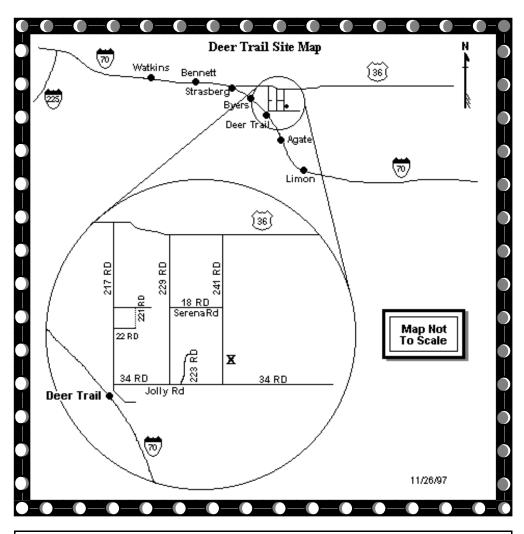
Patti Kurtz will be handling the newsletter. We invite contributions to the newsletter by our DAS membership. You may contact Patti at pkurtz@uswest.net



I had seen it for a couple of weeks, this little text hyperlink on Anacortes Telescope and Wild Bird Inc.'s website; www.buytelescopes.com

This link said that they had moved into a new facility and needed two more people for their staff. I had meant to try and respond, but didn't really feel that I could land a position with them. I was stuck here in Denver, while they were all the way up in Washington state. I wouldn't be able to drive or fly up there for an interview, so what chance did I have of landing a position? It would be great working at a place like that, as Anacortes caters to astronomers and bird/nature watchers. Those have been two big interests of mine for many years. Yes, it would be great having a job that really spoke to long-time interests and hobbies of mine.

Finally I quickly revamped my resume, converted it to PFD form, and e-mailed it off to Herb and Paula York, who run Anacortes. That was followed by a request to fax my references. Within a week, I (Continued on page 7)



PLEASE READ!! The Dark Sky Site is for the use of DAS members

and guests. If you are neither of these, contact an officer of the DAS so that you may be their guest at our Site. Please remember that white light disrupts the eye's dark adaptation and can ruin astrophotography. Following these simple guidelines will improve the experience for all:

Try to arrive before dark. If you have to arrive after dark, turn off headlights when turning into site, and try to arrive from the north. Do not park on the graded, graveled roads. If you have to leave while the field is full of observers, ask assistance in getting out of the site, so that you don't have to turn your car lights on. Turn off all dome and trunk lights. If a light can't be turned off, pull the fuse, use layered red tape or just duct tape over it. Use only dull red flashlights. Never shine a flashlight in someone's face. No open fires, *EVER*. The last person to leave the site at night/in the early morning should close the gate.

Other suggestions:

Wear warm clothes. The nights can be extremely cold in the winter and surprisingly cold even in summer. When approaching the telescope of someone, who does not know you, introduce yourself and ask before looking through the scope. Most members (with the exception of astrophotographers) will be happy to share their scopes. Bring your own toilet paper in case the porta-potty runs out. Serious astrophotographers may wish to use the alternate observing area, which is shaded from the road and main parking area.

DIRECTIONS

The DAS Deer Trail dark site is located about 60 miles due east of the Mouse Trap. To get there, take I-70 east to the Deer Trail exit (exit 328), turn left at the end of the exit ramp and turn left again after you pass the Texaco station on to CR 217. Take CR 217 a little over 1/2 mile to CR 34 and turn right (East). Stay on 34 about 6 miles until you get to CR 241. Turn left (North) on CR 241 and continue about 1.5 miles; there's a culvert with a wide gate on the right (East) side of the road. **Directions to DSS from Den**ver, arrival from the North (the preferred route if you will arrive after dark): Take I-25 Eastbound to exit 316 (Byers). Turn left at bottom of ramp, which puts you on US-36 eastbound. Take US-36 East 17.2 miles to Road 241. Turn right (South) on Road 241 and continue for 6.2 miles. The DAS Dark Sky site entrance is on the left between two tall posts. Note: The travel distance from Denver using the North route is actually 3.9 miles SHORTER than using the traditional South route. Travel time is about the same. The first 5 miles of road 241 heading South from US-36 is narrow and somewhat rough. Use caution when traversing this stretch of Road 241 in bad weather or muddy conditions.

(Continued from page 5)

had a position!

My apartment is steadily becoming more of a shambles as I prepare to move to Washington. Completing this newsletter will be one of my last duties for the Denver Astronomical Society. Patti Kurtz will be taking over starting with the December issue. Terry Chatterton will take over the website. Ron Pearson will fill in as Secretary, at least until the next election.

I would like to thank all of you for letting me inflict all of this nonsense upon the DAS. In particular, I'd like to thank Terry Chatterton, Steve Solon, John Goldberg, Lyle Smith, Debra Davis, Chuck Carlson, Larry Brooks, Ed Kline, Cathi Havens, Bert Harless, Bill Ormsby, Jack Eastman, and all of you who have helped and aided me since I joined the DAS 'way back in 1995. A special thanks to Theron Hampton, upon who I've unloaded some of my astronomical gear the past couple of years.

It's been a heck of a ride. Thanks to all of you for letting me on board.





<u>ForSale</u>

- ⇒ S B I G S T 7 Dual CCD Self guiding Camera Upgradable to S T 7E New \$2450, Asking \$1600. Call Steve 303-688-5074
- ⇒ Sky and Telescope, 1990-1998, missing maybe 1 or 2 issues. Free if you come to pickup, \$50.00 if you want me to ship. If you pick up, then an optional contribution to DAS Chamberlain Observatory or the Deer Trail Site might be appropriate. Call Joe Kraus, 303-933-4399.
- ⇒ Meade 6" ED 152 Refractor with computer drive any heavy mount, 2" & 1.25" Barlows, 2" & 1.25" eyepieces, filters, camera adapter, xtras. Located in Longmont. \$6500. Light pollution in south Longmont is reason for selling. This scope is not easy to transport, 150 lbs. Purchased new in March 1997. Planets and moon are exceptional viewing. Respond to jmwsmw@msn.com

S.E.T.I.

Members and friends of the DAS can now help search for ET at home with your PC or laptop. The Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence at Berkeley has software that you can download to your PC or laptop at no cost to you. The software analyzes data from the Aricebo Radio Telescope in Puerto Rico and searches for signals that could be from another world. There is a group for the DAS where we can log our data results and rate ourselves with other clubs and Universities around the world and possibly be credited with finding an intelligent extra terrestrial radio signal! To get the software and for more

information on the SETI@Home project, go to their website at <u>setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu</u>. The DAS is listed under the Groups heading as a Club and is listed as the "Denver Astronomical Society." If you have any suggestions regarding our SETI group please forward them to Jason Kuchera at deltotum@aol.com or 303-246-4524. Jason Kuchera

The DAS now has its own mail list serve. For more info, and to subscribe, go to; http://www.cudenver.edu/~lguatney/DAS

About the Denver Astronomical Society

The DAS is a group of amateur and professional astronomers sharing a mutual interest in the heavens. The DAS operates the University of Denver's Chamberlin Observatory with its venerable 1894, Alvan Clark, 20" refracting telescope. Our members have been involved with the first public planetarium at the Denver Museum of Natural History and the Smithsonian Astrophysics Observatory's "Moon Watch" program. The DAS successfully petitioned to have the Chamberlin Observatory listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Our Credo is to provide members a forum for increasing and sharing their knowledge, to promote and to educate the public about astronomy, and to preserve the historic telescope and observatory in cooperation with the University of Denver. To these ends we have established three tax deductible funds; the Van Nattan Scholarship Fund, the Chamberlin Restoration Fund, and the DAS Dark Site Fund. This last fund was established to construct and maintain observing facilities sites near Deer Trail in eastern Colorado.

Please call our Info Line at (303) 871-5172 and drop by one of our General Meetings. Become a member and enjoy speakers, facilities, events, and our monthly newsletter, The <u>Denver Observer</u>.

Application fo	r Membership to 7	The Denver Astronomical Society	
	() New	() Renew	
Name:			

City:			
State:			
Zip:			
Home Phone :			
Work Phone:			
E-Mail:			
Occupation:			
Other Interests:			
(Associates Only) School:Grade			
Do you want to download the newsletter from the web site, as a PDF			
file, instead of receiving it in the mail?			
Yes No			
Do you want this information kept out of the yearly roster?			
Yes No			
Please Circle All That Apply:			
Regular - \$30 Associate - \$10 up to age 22			
\$			
Sky & Telescope;/\$29.95 Astronomy/\$29			
\$			
Dark Site Fund Donation			
VanNattan Scholarship Fund\$			
Chamberlin Fund Donation			
Total Amount Paid			
Complete this form, or a copy, and send it with a check or money			
order payable to The Denver Astronomical Society to:			
DAS Treasurer, Chuck Carlson, 1521 S. Vine St., Denver, CO			
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Address:

80210-2835



Denver Astronomical Society c/o Chamberlin Observatory 2930 East Warren Ave. Denver, CO 80208