

Minutes of the Fort Bend Astronomy Club Meeting—June 16, 2006

The meeting opened promptly at 7:00 p.m. with a call to order by President, Mr. Dennis Borgman.

Mr. Borgman introduced the novice speaker of the evening, Mr. Don d'Entremont who gave a talk entitled Luna-ology. Mr. d'Entremont's spoke eloquently on the various aspects of moons in the solar system, concentrating on Luna, Earth's only natural satellite.

At the termination of Mr. d'Entremont's talk, Mr. Borgman called for a short recess.

The meeting reconvened at the end of the break and the featured speaker of the evening, Mr. Jack Nickel, was introduced by FBAC vice-president, Mr. Leonard Ferguson.

Mr. Nickel, affectionately called Triple Nickel by NASA personnel and others, gave a very nice presentation on the NASA micro gravity (sometimes referred to as zero-g) program. Mr. Nickel included two videos showing students and NASA personnel in flight in the KC-135 and David and Wendy Levy in his airplane, the C-9B as part of his presentation. At the end of his talk, he entertained questions from club members and guests. Questions from the floor centered around aspects of flight and the science performed during the 30 to 40 zero-g parabolas flown during a mission. Club members were also quite interested in the physiological aspects of zero-g flight so Mr. Nickel kindly provided a detailed explanation of why this particular aircraft is referred to as the Vomit Comet. His demonstration of how one would use a sick sack in zero gravity was particularly interesting. Mr. Nickel also provided NASA zero-g mission patches and NASA stickers to anyone who would care to take one. His outstanding talk was well received by everyone present. FBAC acknowledges the important work done by devoted NASA people like Mr. Jack Nickel.

Mr. Borgman called for a short recess at the end of the main speakers presentation.

After reconvening the meeting, Mr. Borgman presented Mr. Bill Molinare who gave a short talk on his eclipse cruise in March, 2006.

Next was a book report by Mr. Leonard Ferguson. The minutes taker failed to write down the title of the book and has subsequently forgotten the title. The book dealt with the Mars missions, Spirit and Opportunity.

Mr. Borgman then put out a call for someone to edit the club newsletter which has now been cut back from monthly to quarterly. No volunteers were immediately forthcoming.

Mr. Leonard Pattillo was asked about any upcoming Astronomy On Wheels star parties. Mr. Pattillo said there was one potential but he was not sure because the proponent had not maintained further contact and the star party was to be held in Alvin, TX out of the usual range of FBAC.

Mr. Borgman talked about the upcoming Astronomy Day in October, 2006, reminding members that it was not too early to start planning.

Mr. Steve Goldberg also reminded members that Telescopes For Telethon is right around the corner, with the first day of the campaign on July 8, 2006 at the usual place, Tinsel Town Theater, Beltway 8 and Westpark.

Mr. Richard Echols invited the entire club to a sleepover and star party at his friend's ranch in Schulenburg on the weekend of June 24. Members who wish to attend should RSVP.

Club observing on June 23, 2006, at the Interpretive Center was then discussed with Hannah Lange reminding members that the George Observatory also needs volunteers for that evening. Food and drink would be provided to anyone who volunteers.

Mr. Borgman discussed club loaner scopes and the books available to members from the library, kept by Mr. Alex Cruz.

Mr. Phil Inderwiesen discussed the outcome of a Ft. Bend County Commissioners Court meeting held the day before, reporting that the new county District Attorney now believes a taking assessment should have been held before the lighting ordinance was passed by the commissioners.

Meeting concluded with the question of the month: Why did Gus Grissom name his Gemini 3 space capsule Molly Brown. Several club members believed they had the correct answer so a random drawing was held to determine who could answer first. Mr. Bill Molinare won the drawing and gave the correct answer. Mr. Molinare was awarded a copy of the book Mars book that Mr. Ferguson reported on earlier.

Meeting adjourned at 9:35 to be further convened at Fuddruckers.