



ASTROBITS...

ASKC All Members' Star Party November 20, 2004

Lunar observing, hosted by Walt Robinson at the ICStars Ranch located in west central Missouri, northwest of Warrensburg, Mo.

Driving directions: From Interstate 70, travel south down Missouri Highway 13 towards Warrensburg. Missouri Road 00 is about 12 miles south of I-70. Turn west on 00 and go 1.49 miles. (Just across the single-lane bridge) Turn right into the Ranch.

Or, from the South, locate the intersection of US Highway 50 and Missouri Highway 13. This will be the north edge of Warrensburg, Mo. Drive north on Highway 13 about 4 miles to Missouri Road 00. Turn west and go 1.49 miles. (Just across the single-lane bridge) Turn right into the Ranch. If you get lost call 913-709-5805.

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ASTROGLOSSARY

Big a'mist *n.* 1. A person who owns more than one telescope 2. A person who owns one or more light buckets (*q.v.*), in which case the term is usually written BIGamist.

Big Dob *n.* a very large Dobsonian-mounted telescope.

—syn. light bucket

OUR NEAREST NEIGHBOR

By Walt Robinson,

Since ancient times, man always associated deities with nature, both on the land and in the sky. What does the names Selene, Thoth, Artemis, Hecate, Diana, Sin, Heng-O and Mawu all have in common? They are ancient moon gods and goddesses.

The Sumerians associated the moon with Sin who was depicted as a fierce young bull, with perfect limbs and thick horns. But Sin was not the only moon god. As the moon took on different phases, other gods were associated with the moon — Nanna was the full moon and Asimbabbar the new moon.

The Romans had the goddess Diana. Diana was also the goddess of hunters. Her temple was at Ephesus in Asia Minor and was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Even today in localities of Rome, there still exist shrines dedicated to the old Roman goddess. She was also the twin sister of Apollo.



Diana, Roman goddess of the hunt is associated with Selene, the Greek goddess of the moon.



Selene, also known as Phoebe or Luna, shown on a red-figure clay vase, circa 500–450 BC.



Hecate, goddess of the lower world or waning moon, is one of the three forms of the Greek moon goddess.



Heng-O or Chang-O, from a detail of an eighteenth-century embroidered emperor's robe. In Chinese myth, a white hare was believed to live in the moon.

and fled to the moon to avoid her husband's wrath. Her husband later became God of the Sun and they meet once a month at new moon. On the full moon of the eighth Chinese lunar

The Greeks had many goddesses assigned to the moon. There are conflicting stories as how they were all related. Artemis was considered to be the goddess of the moon, and was also the twin sister of Apollo. Note how this relates back to the Roman goddess Diana who was also the twin sister of Apollo. But, the Romans later associated Diane with Selene, who was also the Greek goddess for the Moon. Selene was also known as Phoebe. Further reading on these three goddesses reveals that Phoebe and Selene were both "titans" of the older gods, whereas Artemis was of the "newer generation". To make matters worse, Selene was also called Luna. She was depicted with a crescent moon on her head, driving a two-horse chariot. Later writing describe the moon goddess in three forms: Selene in the sky, Artemis on Earth, and Hecate in the lower world. The three forms reflect the phases of the moon. As the new moon she is Artemis, reborn and ready for the hunt; as the waxing moon, increasing in fullness, she is Selene; and as the moon wanes to darkness, she becomes Hecate the witch full of knowledge, magic and power to heal or transform.

The Chinese moon goddess Heng-O rules the jade palace of the Moon. It is said she swallowed the pill of immortality

and fled to the moon to avoid her husband's wrath. Her husband later became God of the Sun and they meet once a month at new moon. On the full moon of the eighth Chinese lunar

month, women celebrate the Moon. Tradition of honoring the moon goddess carries on today with Chinese families having a picnic dinner, featuring moon cakes on a blanket surrounded by lanterns and candles.



Thoth of ancient Egypt.

Egypt's Thoth, one of the few ancient gods who was male, was originally associated with the moon. He was generally depicted in human form with the head of an ibis or baboon.

Over time, he also became associated with magic, medicine, astronomy, mathematics and other forms of art. He was born the second son of Nut, after Ra, Neter of the Sun (*Neter in Egyptian mythology refers to "Divine"*). Thoth first appeared in Egypt as the Neter of the Moon. But over time, the lunar-diety status passed naturally to the feminine Neters Isis and Hathor, and Thoth became increasingly identified with the planet Mercury, rather than the moon.

And finally, Mawu was not only a moon



The two-in-one Fon Creator God of Africa is a divine duality. Mawu is the female moonly side and Liza is the male, sunny side.

goddess, but also a supreme goddess to the Fon people of Africa. Together with Liza, the two created the whole universe. Mawu is the goddess of night and joy, while Liza is the god of the day, heat and strength. While Mawu is depicted as an older mother that dwells in the west, Liza is considered young, fierce and harsh. They are considered inseparable and at the unity of the universe. An interesting fact that when there is an eclipse of the sun, the Fon people believe Mawu and Liza are courting.

Walt Robinson has been a member of the Astronomical Society of Kansas City since 1987. His present duties include Webmaster for the society's Web site. He has presented many programs at the public nights at Powell Observatory and in Bonner Springs, Kan. where he lives.

Walt also runs his own "Robinson Lunar Observatory" to spur interest in the moon among amateur astronomers. His recent "lunar light ray" program brought many amateurs together from across the United States and abroad to study and observe these events. An article written in the Astronomical League's Reflector explained the program, and as a result recruited many more interested amateurs into studying the moon.

A NEW CONTROLLER FOR THE RUISINGER TELESCOPE

By Rick Henderson

Every student Clint Coffman and Dennis Blanchette, under the supervision of their instructor, ASKC member Rick Henderson, are about half finished with the design and construction of a new handheld, radio-frequency remote control for the Ruisinger Telescope at Powell Observatory. The new controller will augment, not replace, the existing heavyweight controller we all know and love, allowing either controller to be used at any time.

The new controller broadcasts an FM signal at 488 MHz and should have enough range to control the telescope from as far away as the Louisburg Telescope area — but not as far as Home-town Pizza, much to Joe Wright's disappointment. It will feature a red, backlit 2x16 LCD display to inform the user on status and selected movement operations, such as dome rotation, declination and right

ascension movement, as well as selected speed. The controller, which operates on four AA alkaline batteries, will display remaining battery life and will allow control of LCD contrast and backlight brightness. The overall weight, including batteries, is expected to be less than two pounds. It will have a neck strap to allow the operator the use of both hands. The design of the controller will also allow the incorporation of additional control features in the future.

In addition to the new controller, a spare unit will be constructed and all documentation materials will be provided to the ASKC for any future modifications and/or repairs. The projected installation date is January of 2005.

I'm sure ASKC members are anxious to get a look at the new controller and that Clint and Dennis are anxious to get Professor Henderson off their case!



Clint Coffman (left) and Dennis Blanchette hold the prototype board for the new controller. Photo by Rick Henderson