

ASTRO TENT

September 2007

Our meeting coordinator, Cathy McWatters, took it upon herself to add a new feature to our monthly meetings. In the greater Toronto area, we are fortunate to have a number of well-established astronomy equipment retailers – and our membership will not shy away from seeking the latest items hot off the shelves. Our sobriquet, North York Acquisition Association, is well earned! Cathy decided to invite one of the local retailers to each meeting to give the attendees a closer look at some of the newest products available. The featured retailer at the September meeting was Ray Khan, of [Khan Scope Centre](#). Ray has been serving the needs of the amateur astronomical community for over 25 years.



Ray brought along two newly available pieces of equipment. The first, the [Meade mySKY](#), is a hand-held guide to the night sky. Looking a bit like the offspring of an original Star Trek phaser and a cordless Makita, the mySKY is a point-and-shoot portal to the universe. All you do is aim the device to any point in the sky to get a multi-media presentation on any objects within view. Video, still images and text are displayed on a full-colour LCD screen. Audio commentary is available as well. mySKY uses a GPS to determine its location, and magnetic inclinometers to figure out where it is pointing. It has an extensive database of objects. The built-in software and database may be updated via an Internet connection. mySKY can be connected to any Meade computerized telescope to allow slewing to where the device is pointed, as well as adding GPS functions.



The second item was the latest TeleVue eyepiece, the amazing 100-degree FOV [Ethos](#) eyepiece. This is a brand new design, significantly different from the (until now) flagship 82-degree Naglers. The Ethos has the typical TeleVue characteristics: good contrast and sharpness across the entire field, no residual colour or astigmatism, and top-notch construction. The 13mm Ethos tips the scales at 560 grams and is designed for both 2-inch and 1.25-inch focussers. The big advantage of the Ethos over lesser eyepieces is that you can get the same true FOV at a higher magnification. For example, a 26mm Plossl

with a 50-degree apparent FOV will give the same true field as the 13mm Ethos, but at only one-half the magnification. (OK, I know it's ridiculous to compare an \$80 Plossl with a \$700 Ethos!!) Higher magnification knocks down the background sky's relative brightness, yielding a higher contrast across the entire FOV.



Several members filled out the rest of the meeting activities. John Merchant noted that September 5th was the 30th anniversary of the Voyager launch. Both Voyager 1 and 2 are in the very outer reaches of the solar system, as are the Pioneer X and XI spacecraft. These (eventual) interstellar space probes will be joined by the New Horizons craft, currently en route to Pluto via Jupiter. New Horizons is currently zipping along at 20 km/s and John wondered when or if this last craft would ever become more distant from the Sun than either of the Voyagers or Pioneers, which are travelling at a much more sedate pace. You

can get live positions of these craft from the [Heavens Above](#) website.

Malcolm Park followed with an animated sequence of the August 28th lunar eclipse. He set up his cameras and telescopes to capture a view of the eclipsed moon as it was setting behind the Toronto skyline. The sequence was absolutely terrific, with Cathy saying that it was the best lunar eclipse presentation she had ever seen.

Norm Folkers showed his efforts in the ATM department. He built a folded 80mm refractor with a fixed-height eyepiece. The observer can view half the sky without moving from his/her seat, although it does appear possible to look over your own shoulder. The objective is a bargain-basement achromat, around f/10 or so. A couple of surplus diagonals, plumbing parts and a selection of suitable hardware items make up the rest of the scope.



Richard McWatters showed the fruits of the club's all-sky camera project. Eventually this will be part of a meteor detector network. Richard also showed some images taken with the Oak Heights RAT. The RAT project is moving ahead in fits and starts, but it is progressing.

David Cotterell finished the evening by showing some images taken from his observatory.



