

## A member's personal story and perspective:

### HAA is a Gift

I have been a member of Hamilton Amateur Astronomers since moving to Dundas in 2005. Astronomy has always been an interest in my life – who isn't fascinated by our night sky? - but I never had the time to spend to learn more. My life was very busy as a chemical/environmental engineer and later consulting as an occupational hygienist looking at the evaluation and control of workplace health hazards.



We moved to Dundas for many reasons one of which was to have access to services for a brain injury I had sustained in December of 2000. My wife, Nancy and I, were in a bad motor vehicle accident when someone came through a stop sign and T-boned us early in the morning on a snowy day. Having two parents hospitalized for a significant time was also very traumatic for our four children aged 9-18 at the time of the accident. Brain injury ultimately has had the most impact on me with memory and concentration issues that have only partially resolved.

Finding HAA was a bonus in our move here. I had more time now being forcibly retired... Unfortunately, it has not been that simple with the memory and concentration problems making new learning and remembering old learning problematic. Not as much of a problem if you can devote the necessary time but much of my good recovery is owed to the volunteer work I do at the Hamilton Brain Injury Association and Hamilton Health Sciences and that is about as much as I can handle at this point. The recovery is also due to a very supportive family which still occupies a good deal of my time as well. As a result, the extra time I thought I had gained has not really ever materialized.

I went out and bought a decent small refractor telescope at an appropriate store i.e. not a department store as per HAA advice, was disappointed in what I could see and couldn't spend long enough at night when I was disproportionately more tired to learn more... I bought a more expensive 8 inch Schmidt Cassegrain and soon found myself in the same position with learning, concentration and tiredness... When I still have trouble remembering the constellations and where they all are, this was clearly the wrong thing to do. Fortunately, I had a wonderful organization to donate the instrument to that would put it to good use... apparently, it still is - right Jim Walmsley?

So you have not seen me very often at star parties or observation nights and less so at regular meetings. This is not at all because I am not interested but because I am respecting the limits that now apply to my life. In the meantime, I enjoy every meeting I get to and particularly all the people I meet there. Intelligence and caring for the deeper meaning of life that the love of astronomy ultimately leads one to, is rampant in this organization. It is truly a gift to be part of it and I hope to remain so for many years to come.