

July 27, 1971

Phone: 489-7651

* * T H E P R A I R I E A S T R O N O M E R * *

Our meeting this month will be in the Olin Hall of Science at Nebraska Wesleyan University at 7:30 p.m. on the 27th of July. The program promises to be an interesting one with Mr. Ed Woerner speaking on the topic, "The Structure of the Universe."

--The President's Report--

I have been having a little trouble deciding on a date for our annual family picnic and star party. We generally have it late in August or early in September, but the only acceptable moonless dates I can come up with are August 14th and September 18th. A breakdown of upcoming Saturdays is as follows:

August 14-----everything fine
August 21-----Astronomical League National Convention
August 28-----Moon doesn't set till 11:25 p.m.
September 4---Full Moon
September 11--Moon rises at midnight
September 18--new moon; all okay if it doesn't frost!

Some of the things in favor of August 14th are that we will have the best look at Mars at that time, and there will be enough residual Perseid meteors to make it all worthwhile. In favor of the 18th of September is the fact that the sun sets much earlier and we can get at our favorite pastime sooner in the evening. The final decision on this matter will be made during the meeting this Tuesday night. See you there?

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* * R E M I N D E R * *

There will be a Gateway Show for the public the 29th of this month, so bring your scopes and let's give a decent show for the interest and edification of some nice folks as well as the financial support offered our club.

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METEORS!

On Thursday night/Friday morning, the 29th & 30th of July, the Delta Aquarids will radiate from two foci, both at R.A. 22h 36m, but at declinations of zero degrees, and -17 degrees. This shower produces about 40 per hour (after midnight, naturally), the moon will set before midnight, and you needn't even crane your neck to see the radiants since they are low in the southern sky. What more could an astronomer ask--that they fall on a weekend maybe?

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MISCELLANY

The next Apollo launch for the Moon will occur Monday morning at 8:34 a.m. CDT if all goes well in their countdown. Hopefully this will be a safe and routine happening which will glean significant scientific information, possibly renewing support for our space program. It would be a shame to give up the lead in what not too long ago was called "the space race" (remember?) out of nothing more than apathy.

The ruddy planet Mars will be closer to the earth during the month of August than at any time since 1924. Here's a chance to get a really decent look at its surface features with the club 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch.

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The Prairie Astronomer
1836 South 58th
Lincoln, Nebr. 68506

Mr. Earl Moser

--The Skies This Month--

- Moon: Full on August 6th, new by the 20th. Good deep sky observing from about the 16th through the 27th. The moon reaches perigee on August 9th at a distance of "only" 225,600 miles from the earth. At that time, its angular diameter will be almost 33 minutes of arc.
- Mercury: Barely visible in the west at sunset during the first week of August only; lost in the glare after that.
- Venus: Too close to the Sun to be visible during the entire month.
- Mars: WOW! It is as bright as it ever gets at magnitude -2.5, and visible nearly the entire night toward the end of the month. Look for it low in the southeastern sky about an hour after sunset. The disc is nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ minute of arc in diameter.
- Jupiter: By the end of this month, it will set only $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours after the solar glare disappears. It is visible in the southwestern sky at magnitude -1.9 during the early evening.
- Saturn: This 0.4 magnitude planet is in Taurus near the bright star Aldebaran rising in the eastern sky about 11:30 by mid-month. Its ring system is a 39" by 16" ellipse inclined 25 degrees to our line of sight.
- Uranus: Too close to the Sun to be visible.
- Neptune: In the constellation Libra visible in the southwestern sky shortly after sunset at 8th magnitude near co-ordinates R.A. 15h 54m, dec. -18° 32'.

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Seven members of the Prairie Astronomy Club made the jaunt from Lincoln to Fayette, Missouri for the Mid-States Regional Convention for the Astronomical League. On July 16th, Earl Moser and his wife, Brian Dodson, Brian Rugg, Monte Cole, Steve Haack, and Dan Cowell left to meet up with the St. Joe astro group on their way to Fayette. After the civilities and flat tires were exchanged (2 of 'em yet) the group arrived in Fayette about 9:30 p.m. Upon registering and unpacking, the rest of the evening was happily spent in star gazing with other interested amateurs.

After breakfast Saturday morning, the ball got rolling with club reports and paper presentations in the morning. The McDonald-Douglas Amateur Astronomers of St. Louis (their 2nd club) are the host club for the '72 Regional Convention. The amateur of the year award was presented to Mr. Robert L. Sandy of Kansas City for his outstanding efforts in grazing occultations and contributions to the astronomical society in general. This award was very much deserved.

Later, an address was given by the guest speaker, Dr. D. C. Geilker, professor of astronomy at William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri. His topic was "The Case for Going to the Moon."

The weather that evening was ideal for the second consecutive star party, and a good time was genuinely had by all. Our group left for Lincoln about noon the next day, Sunday the 18th.

A final bonus for our club during this trip was the donation of the Midland Empire Astronomy Club of St. Joe of their equatorial mount for their 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ incher to us gratis. Seems like they have a new one which is so elaborate that no one who saw it can explain it very well. At any rate, many thanks to our brothers in astronomy for their gift. It is much appreciated and will be put to use soon I'm sure.

One more thing; our Prairie Astronomy Club may be co-host along with the Omaha and St. Joe clubs for the 1973 National Convention. We can discuss this further at the meeting. Y'all come, y'hear?

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On Sunday night, July 18th, this observer was privileged to watch a genuine celestial phenomenon; that of the Great Red Spot of the planet Jupiter as it disappeared around the curvature of the planet during a 10 to 20 minute interval. This was with the aid of a very fine 6 inch Newtonian owned by (I hope) Brian Rugg. There were two other people from our club present out there at Holmes Lake that night; Dan Cowell, and Earl Moser. These three men were doing a selfless, and somewhat thankless job--that of trying to help some girl scouts attain their astronomy merit badges. I have participated in such activities in the past and know full well how frustrating it can be. Don't laugh if you haven't tried teaching something to a couple dozen giggling girls who can't hear you very well and don't understand you when they do hear, and whose parents come get them the minute it gets dark. I say hats off to Earl, Dan, and Brian for their efforts at getting astronomy better accepted and understood by a largely apathetic public.

---Lawrence Pilgram