

**** THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMER ****

This month our meeting will be held as usual at 7:30 pm in the Olin Hall of Science on the Nebraska Wesleyan Campus. The meeting date is always in the top left hand corner of the newsletter. This Month the program will be on the more advanced aspects of astrophotography. Rick Johnson will present it hoping that more people in the club will become actively involved in this challenging and rewarding aspect of astronomy. There will of course be a drawing for a door prize and (as always!) there will be refreshments after the meeting. Don't miss this one as it should be interesting and informative.

----- THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT -----

I have been thinking about our annual family picnic and star party, but haven't decided on a date yet. We generally have it in August and near the time of new moon. New moon in August this year is on Saturday, the 17th. This will conflict with the Astronomical League Convention scheduled for August 14-18 in Lansing, Michigan. I am sure that there are some from our Club and the Omaha group that will want to attend both, so we will consider other dates. On August 24, the moon is at first quarter and won't set until midnight. On August 10 the moon is at last quarter and won't rise until midnight. It seems to me that the 10th would be the best date for the picnic. We will have a couple of hours of darkness for deep sky observing before the moon rises, and this date is close enough to the Perseid Meteor shower, (August 11-12) that we should be able to see quite a few meteors.

If there are any other suggestions we will discuss it at the meeting.

Don't forget the Mid-State Convention in Little Rock, Ark. June 20-23.

See you at the meeting!

Earl Moser
President

----- SUPER REFLECTIVE COATINGS -----

Super mirror coatings have been available for several years but until recently they have been astronomically expensive. A few companies now offer these coatings at reasonable cost. As my 10" f/8 mirror and secondary were in need of recoating I decided to try the new coatings. I sent my mirrors to: Precision Optical Coating Labs., 26098 Gatty Dr., Laguna Niguel, Calif. 92677. They offer several super coatings in all price ranges. I chose DLII which was at that time called Astrocoat. The cost was about \$35 including postage. This coating increases overall light efficiency about 20%. Delivery took about two months (Bob Allen in Omaha recently sent a mirror thru in 10 days).

The coating has a much smoother and harder overcoating than the quartz used in the past. This means the coating should be good for at least 15-20 years. The greater smoothness also greatly increases image contrast (a benefit they don't mention but is far more worthwhile than increased light).

Sirius now splits at 75x. At 250x there is 5" or 6" of dark sky between the two stars. Detail is visible in M-1 at 750x!!! NGC 2371-2 in Gemini used to appear as two faint patches. Now an incomplete ring can be seen joining the segments. Saturn's rings show numerous divisions never seen before. The colors of the cloud bands are vivid and the moons appear far brighter due to the darker sky around Saturn.

As these observations were from town the 20% light increase has not been noticed due to the city lights. It is the increased contrast which has been the story to date. I will go so far as to say that these coatings make an f/8 reflector

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- The Tom Pansing I Knew -

Some 15 years ago astronomy brought Tom Pansing and me together. We often talked about what astronomy meant to us and what we could do to share it with others.

In 1960, through Tom's foresight and efforts, the Prairie Astronomy Club was formed. It was one of Tom's loves; he loved astronomy and gave a part of his life to it, as well as other worthwhile humanitarian projects.

Words do not suffice in saying that all of us who knew Tom will miss him.

--- Jess Williams
for
The Prairie Astronomy Club