

11-75

# THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMER

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## PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB ELECTS NEW OFFICERS FOR SIXTEENTH YEAR, 1975-1976

New officers were elected at the regular Prairie Astronomy Club meeting October 28. They are:

- President -- Earl Moser
- Vice President -- Larry Stepp
- Treasurer -- Lee Thomas
- Secretary -- Jess Williams
- Program Chairman -- Jack Dunn

At the same meeting, Earl Moser announced the following appointments:

- Newsletter Editor--Lee Thomas
- Assistant Editor--Merton Sprengel
- Assistant Program Chairman--  
Dr. Robert Manthey
- Observing Chairman--  
Dave Knisely
- Hospitality Director--  
Rick Johnson
- Librarians-- Fred Stuart,  
Joe Hamersky

In addition, if you didn't attend the meeting, you missed Rick Johnson's slides of Nova Cygni, about eight minutes of what NASA billed as "excess footage" of the Apollo Soyuz mission supplied by Program Chairman Jack Dunn, and the latest progress report on the Community Observatory from Carroll Moore (about \$13,500 of the \$50,000 needed had been collected by the meeting date.)

Larry Stepp made a motion that the club investigate costs and plans for construction of a portable telescope that could be donated to the observatory. Don Baker, Rick Johnson, and Brad Binder were named to a

committee to be chaired by Stepp. A report is expected at the next meeting.

## NEW FORMAT FOR CLUB NEWSLETTER

Some of the changes planned for The Prairie Astronomer are evident in this issue. The horizontal folded format on legal size paper will allow more space for news each month at less cost than two letter-size pages. The editor has made arrangements to receive astronomy bulletins from the Central Bureau for Astronomical Telegrams (International Astronomical Union), the Association of Lunar and Planetary Observers (ALPO), Astronomical Society of the Pacific, and the Associated Press. Each month we will publish as many of these bulletins as space allows in an attempt to make this newsletter as valuable to our membership as possible.

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## NEXT MEETING IS NOVEMBER 25-- HYNEK SPEECH WILL BE HIGHLIGHT

The next regular meeting of the Prairie Astronomy Club will be Tuesday, November 25, 7:30 p.m., at Olin Hall of Science, Nebraska Wesleyan University.

The highlight of the meeting will be a videotape replay of a speech by Dr. J. Allen Hynek. Dr. Hynek spoke at the Great Plains Planetarium Association meeting

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## SCRIPT REVEALS CLUE TO SUPERNOVA THAT BECAME THE VELA PULSAR

New York (AP) --A study of cuneiform script from ancient Mesopotamia, perhaps man's oldest form of writing, has found what appear to be clues to an ancient supernova, the huge explosion of a star.

The discovery of references in the cuneiform--wedge-shaped symbols impressed on clay tablets--was made by a New York explorer, George Michanowsky, and described in the next issue of The Explorers Journal.

The supernova occurred perhaps 6,000 to 11,000 years ago in the constellation Vela in the far southern sky. Its remnant is a small, dense neutron star, or pulsar, spinning rapidly and emitting periodic pulses of radio waves.

Since the discovery of Pulsars, there has been interest in finding any records left by early man of supernovas.

The most famous supernova took place in 1054 and was recorded by Chinese astronomers. It produced what is now the Crab Nebula, an expanding cloud of dust and gas. The Vela supernova is much older.

"...there are references to the appearance of a mighty star in the Sumerian equivalent of what we today call the constellation Vela, where the supernova occurred," Michanowsky writes.

"This star, called MUL NUN-KI in Sumerian, was considered sacred to

E-A, the god of the southern ocean (today's Persian Gulf), the source of all wisdom and man's benevolent teacher of the arts of civilization. Eventually, the name MUL NUN-KI was used for that particular area of the sky.

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### HYNEK SPEECH AT NEXT MEETING

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held earlier this year at Missouri Western State College in St. Joseph.

Hynek is well known as the author of several books on UFOs, the result of his personal studies on the subject, as well as the vast wealth of data which he helped organize as chief astronomical consultant to the official Air Force UFO study. Among his other credits, he is director of the Dearborn Observatory of Northwestern University, where he is also professor of Astronomy, he is director of the Center for UFO Studies in Chicago, and past director of the Satellite Tracking Program.

Our program chairman, Jack Dunn, says Hynek's talk covers a wide variety of subjects, including some discussion with Ted Phillips, one of Hynek's field investigators. Because the tape runs nearly a full hour, you will want to get to the meeting on time.

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THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMER is published monthly by the Prairie Astronomy Club, and is free to club members. Yearly newsletter subscription without regular membership is \$3. Regular membership (including one-year subscription to Sky & Telescope, club newsletter, and four quarterly issues of the Astronomical League publication, The Reflector) is \$8. Family membership, \$10. Editor, Lee Thomas (489-3855). Assistant Editor, Merton Sprengel.



If you spot a report that you believe would be of interest to other club members, whether it's in the newspaper, on the radio, or even an interesting rumor that might be worth following up, your call to the editor would be appreciated. I can be reached at KLMS (489-3855) most of the time, and if I'm not around leave a message so I can return your call.

To assure that the newsletter is published well in advance of meeting dates, the deadline for stories is Tuesday night of the week prior to each meeting. We will aim to have the finished newsletter in the mail no later than Thursday preceding each meeting, which should allow for nearly five mail delivery days.

The mailing list has been updated and every effort was made to include all active members with their correct addresses. You may notice a date included on the address plate. It indicates the month and year your membership comes up for renewal according to our records. The designation "NL" after the date means you have paid the nominal membership fee of \$3 to receive only the newsletter (not Sky & Telescope). An "F" means yours is a family membership (yearly dues \$10). There is no special designation for regular memberships (\$8).

In some cases, when it was discovered that membership dues had not been paid by the actual expiration date earlier this year, newsletter mailings were extended to 12/75 in hopes that the delinquent member will renew before the end of this year. After that, with a steep postal rate increase facing us, it will be necessary to pare the mailing list to

paid members only.

Please check the date on your address plate and let us know if you find any errors.

We sincerely want the newsletter to be of value to you--and we want it to reach you on time and regularly.

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#### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Earl will have a full-fledged President's message next issue, but in the meantime, just a couple of items:

Last meeting, someone apparently picked up Earl's November issue of Sky & Tel, which also contained some club notes. His name is on the cover, so if you find you now have two copies of the magazine, one with Earl's name, please bring the latter to this month's meeting.

Earl again stood a lonely vigil at Gateway Thursday night, November 13th, one of the chilliest nights to date. Larry Stepp manned the telescope for a time while Earl warmed up inside. Even with cold weather, and an early fold-up time of 8:30 p.m., there were people who wanted to peer through the scope. While the Gateway season is about over, let's keep in mind when the weather warms up again that the Gateway shows are one of the fine services the club performs--and we've netted a lot of new members through them. We need more scopes than one man can handle to make the shows work.

--Lee Thomas

# U.S. ASTRONOMER FINDS OPTICAL EVIDENCE OF A BLACK HOLE IN SPACE

(Reuters News Agency)

London--An American astronomer Tuesday disclosed rare visual evidence corroborating the existence in deep space of a "black hole," a mysterious area where time and space are distorted.

X rays, brighter than anything ever detected in the universe, were discovered this year by British astronomers to the excitement of the scientific world.

It opened up the prospect that the source of the X ray was a black hole. But more information was needed, particularly measurements of its distance from Earth based on actual sightings.

Tuesday Dr. Edward Gull of Houston's Johnson Space Center told a meeting of the Royal Society, an organization of Britain's top scient-

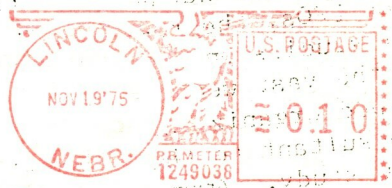
ists, he had made the necessary observations and calculations.

From the complex calculations emerges a picture of a holocaust lighting up a corner of the Milky Way with an energy up to 50,000 times more powerful than the sun.

The debris of a dying star, known as AO621 Minus 0, and perhaps 9,000 light years away, is orbiting a companion star, tearing particles and gases from its surface by the force of its own gravity.

What is actually seen-- Dr. Gull used one of the world's most powerful telescopes at Kitt Peak, Arizona -- is a sort of aurora around the object, consisting of dust heated to millions of degrees--hot enough to generate X rays.

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