

REVIEW OF DECEMBER MEETING, REPORT
OF 66 ACTIVE MEMBERS IN CLUB

(Continued from page 1)

These names bring our active membership list to 66. In thumbing through old newsletters, we discovered that the club listed 33 active members on a roster published in 1972. We have doubled our membership in a little more than three years! That is a considerable accomplishment, and it makes the club stronger, and better able to serve its members.

SOVIETS REPORT VENUS HOLDS VOLCANO

(Reuter News Agency)

Moscow-- Soviet scientists studying photographs taken by two probes that landed on Venus in October believe there has been a recent volcanic eruption, Tass reported.

They think this is confirmed by rounded stones in one of the photographs, which resemble stones shot out of volcanoes on the Kurile Islands in the Soviet far east.

Tass said the pictures showed that the first of the craft, Venus-9, landed on a steep hill, which could be a volcanic crater.

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THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMER

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DUES ARE INCREASED, BUT STILL REMAIN BELOW SKY & TEL SUBSCRIPTION PRICES

As expected, Prairie Astronomy Club dues were increased at the December meeting. The new dues schedule, which became effective January 1, 1976, is:

Regular membership.....\$9.00
Family membership.....\$11.00
Newsletter only (no Sky & Telescope subscription)\$3.00 (unchanged).

The members were unaware of an impending increase in individual Sky & Telescope subscription rates at the time of the meeting, and assumed that the new membership dues would be equal to the (then) current Sky & Tel subscription price. In fact, Sky Publishing Corporation has since announced an increase in individual subscription rates to \$10, which makes club membership even at the new dues level, an exceptional bargain.

The club's telescope project, in which an eight-inch rich field scope would be built and donated to the new Community Bicentennial Observatory, was formally approved at the December meeting with affirmative votes of 25 eligible members, in support of the unanimous decision to proceed with the project by the Board of Directors. Larry Stepp noted the addition of Rick Johnson to the members working on the scope. Rick will contribute woodworking services.

Earl Moser announced the appointment of Roger Besch as assistant ob-

serving chairman, to supplement the efforts of Dave Knisely. Roger has been one of those hardy souls who shows up for most of the impromptu star parties equipped with his new 12-inch Cave reflector (and someone to help assemble it). The editor, for one, has certainly appreciated this because he's usually too lazy to set up his own scope, and Roger's superb instrument is perfect for a lot of random sky probing and shop talk.

New members added to the club's roster since the list published in December are:

Tom Peterson, 6161 South 70th Street, Lincoln 68516
Rodney Thorburn, 5401 Rosebriar Court, Lincoln 68516.

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JANUARY MEETING RETURNS TO OLIN

The January meeting will return to our regular stomping grounds, Olin Hall at Nebraska Wesleyan, on Tuesday, January 27, at 7:30 p.m. Program Chairman Jack Durn reports that he has received a 30-minute NASA Apollo-Soyuz film which, at press time, was the most likely program...subject to last-minute changes.

Earl Moser discovered a copy of the rare, practically non-existent club bylaws. A reading of them (Continued on page 2)

OBSERVING CHAIRMAN'S REPORT NOTES SKY SIGHTS FOR FROZEN OBSERVERS

Since the months of January and February are the coldest months the amateur astronomer must endure, I will confine this month's report to objects that can be located fairly fast and that are worth looking for.

Visually, you should notice that the winter sky seems to contain more bright collections of stars than the summer sky. As a matter of fact, these stars appear as a belt running from Sirius and points south, up to Ursa Major--including, along the way, Orion, Taurus, Auriga, Perseus, and Gemini.

In Gemini, use a 6- or 8- inch telescope to find an interesting planetary nebula, NGC 2392. It is about two degrees southeast of Delta Gemini and is of about magnitude 8.5. It is known as the Eskimo Nebula, since it appears as if it were a person in a fur parka when seen through a large instrument.

The next object to look for is the galactic cluster M35, near the star 5 Gemini. I consider it to be the second best open cluster in the northern sky. Those with larger instruments should try for two rather faint clusters nearby: NGC 2157 and NGC 2158. The former is on the southwest edge of M35, while the latter is about a degree or so farther south-

west.

In Canis Major is a most interesting cluster, M47. It is about 5 degrees south of Sirius and is interesting because of the number of different colored stars visible.

--Dave Knisely

JANUARY MEETING (from Page 1)

discloses that they are outdated with respect to certain club procedures. It is likely that some discussion of the bylaws will take place at the next meeting.

Fifteen copies of the Observer's Handbook (from the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada) have been ordered, and may be available at the January meeting if they are delivered in time. Members who wish to have a copy are encouraged to attend, because they will be sold on a first-come, first-served basis. Since a minimum order of 11 copies is necessary to obtain a 25% discount, it is unlikely that we will be able to reorder at this price. With postage and discount figured, we should be able to sell them at \$2.50 each, a savings of 65¢ on the price you would pay if you ordered direct from the Royal Astronomical Society.

THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMER is published monthly by the Prairie Astronomy Club, and is free to club members. Yearly subscription to the newsletter only 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 \$9, family membership is \$11. Editor: Lee Thomas (489-3855), Assistant Editor, Merton Sprengel (489-3177).

COMET WATCH: BRADFIELD FAINTER THAN EXPECTED, BUT HOPES ARE HIGH FOR WEST

A revised ephemeris for comet Bradfield (1975p) by Brian G. Marsden of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory predicted that the comet's magnitude on January 3 would be only 6.5. Earlier predictions (in our December newsletter) indicated that the comet would be about 5th magnitude in early January. Marsden's new calculations, based on observations from mid-November to December 3, show the comet fading to tenth magnitude by the end of the month. For the sharp-eyed, Marsden's predicted positions are:

| | RA (1950) | DEC (1950) | Mag* |
|---------|-----------|------------|------|
| Jan. 23 | 21h26.44m | +29°49.6' | 9.6 |
| 28 | 22 00.57 | +34 13.8 | |
| Feb. 2 | 22 33.77 | +37 38.0 | 10.7 |
| 7 | 23 05.37 | +40 10.8 | |
| 12 | 23 34.92 | +42 02.2 | 11.7 |
| 17 | 0 02.23 | +43 21.5 | |
| 22 | 0 27.28 | +44 16.9 | 12.6 |
| 27 | 0 50.20 | +44 55.0 | |

Comet West, on the other hand, seems to be behaving almost as originally predicted. The latest observations at press time were from D. Seargent, The Entrance, New South Wales, who made visual magnitude estimates with 20 x 65 binoculars on January 1.45 UT, magnitude 10; on January 3.44 UT, magnitude 10; and on January 4.44 UT, magnitude 9.5. The comet is still too far south to be seen by Lincoln observers, and will remain so until after perihelion, which occurs February 25 at a distance of .196626 AU. Below are the complete estimates for West's positions by Charles S. Morris, from elements by Brian G. Marsden. Since these predictions are likely to be refined as more accurate data become available, we will carry more March positions in the February newsletter.

*indicates visual magnitude

| | RA (1950) | DEC (1950) | Earth-Comet Distance-AU | Sun-Comet Distance-AU | Tail Length (mil mi/deg)** | Mag* |
|---------|-----------|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|------|
| Feb. 27 | 22h46.20 | -3°00.6m | .807 | .209 | 2.5 | -0.3 |
| 28 | 22 37.27 | -1 10.4 | .798 | .224 | 2.3 | -0.0 |
| 29 | 22 28.25 | 0 27.5 | .794 | .244 | 2.0 | .3 |
| Mar. 1 | 22 19.57 | 1 52.8 | .796 | .267 | 1.7 | .7 |
| 2 | 22 11.45 | 3 6.4 | .801 | .292 | 1.6 | 1.1 |
| 3 | 22 4.01 | 4 9.5 | .810 | .318 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| 4 | 21 57.25 | 5 3.9 | .821 | .345 | 1.4 | 1.9 |
| 5 | 21 51.15 | 5 50.9 | .833 | .373 | 1.4 | 2.3 |
| 6 | 21 45.66 | 6 31.8 | .845 | .400 | 1.4 | 2.6 |
| 7 | 21 40.71 | 7 07.7 | .859 | .427 | 1.4 | 2.9 |
| 8 | 21 36.25 | 7 39.5 | .872 | .455 | 1.4 | 3.2 |
| 9 | 21 32.21 | 8 7.8 | .886 | .482 | 1.4 | 3.5 |
| 10 | 21 28.56 | 8 33.3 | .900 | .509 | 1.5 | 3.8 |

** Tail length in millions of miles per degree of observed length

PRESIDENT'S JANUARY MESSAGE WITH CLUB HISTORY, From page 3...

in 1961. The club held its meetings for awhile in 1963 at the University of Nebraska museum; in 1964 and 1965 the club met at Union Loan & Savings at 56th & O Streets.

Since then all meetings have been at Wesleyan, in Van Fleet Hall till January, 1969, and then into the new Olin Hall of Science where the club presently meets.

The club was first affiliated with Sky & Telescope on October 16, 1962.

The first newsletter was published April 6, 1962, by Pete Schultz.

In August, 1962, it was first suggested that the club join the Astronomical League.

June 30, 1962--The first private star party was held at the home of Dick Hartley.

August 9, 1962-- First Gateway Show.

July, 1965 -- Club observatory plans first discussed.

December 20, 1965-- The club was incorporated thanks to Phillip and Richard Johnson.

June 9, 1967-- Club members first attended a Midstates Region Astronomical League convention. The first national convention attended by the club members was August, 1968.

August, 1967-- The club bought a 12½-inch f/6 reflecting telescope.

In late 1967 the club joined the Astronomical League and changed Eastern Nebraska from North Central to the Midstates region.

August, 1968-- First club family

picnic and star party.

June 5, 6, 7, 1970 -- Our club is host to the Midstates convention. The convention was held at Olin Hall where the club regularly meets.

In the summer of 1973, the Lincoln and Omaha clubs co-hosted the national convention of the Astronomical League in Omaha.

Born in 1961, the club is now 15 years old. Thanks to its early guardians it has spent very little time in infancy, but it has developed fast and strong. With a growth from 14 to 66 members in the past 15 years, our club can be proud of this and its many other achievements.

Earl Moser

SCIENTISTS RUN SHORT OF NAMES

Scholars of the heavens are in a cultural crisis on earth. Hundreds of craters, mountains, plains and canyons on other planets are now being mapped; and, they must also receive names.

To meet the nomenclature gap, scientists have been forced to look beyond the traditional lists of explorers and fellow scientists after whom the surface features of Mars and the moon have been called. For Venus, they have agreed, women in mythology and history would be appropriate; for Mercury, figures in the arts and the humanities. Already, the most prominent feature of the south polar region on Mercury bears the name of J. S. Bach. --(N.Y. Times)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE FOR JANUARY GIVES CLUB HISTORY THROUGH FIFTEEN YEARS

It has been nearly fifteen years since the formation of the Prairie Astronomy Club, and I thought it best to rewrite the club history at this time, before some of the vital information is lost in the dark ages of years past.

I got my information from some of the charter members and other long time club members. Most of the information, however, was gleaned from dozens of back issues of our club newsletter. The oldest copy is dated April, 1962.

The dates of important events concerning the club are as complete and accurate as I can recall. If there are any missing or incorrect dates, let me know and I will have the corrections noted in a future newsletter. The lists of charter members and club officers are open for corrections, too, so let me know if any are needed. In the list of club officers, the date noted is the year and approximate month in which the year's election was held. A question mark indicates that I forgot who held that particular office and I can't seem to find out.

A HISTORY OF THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1961-1976

The club seems to have begun about the time of the November 7, 1960 transit of Mercury. An item in the newspaper prior to the event was noted by several interested people in the area near Lincoln. I must have

seen the news item myself as I recall observing the transit from Hickman on November 7. The news item also mentioned that Professor Carroll Moore was going to observe the transit from the Wesleyan Observatory. Several of the astronomy enthusiasts joined Professor Moore for the event and afterwards decided to have a meeting in the near future.

Widespread publicity by the news media called the attention of others interested in astronomy to the upcoming meeting and the possibility of forming a club. Informal meetings were held at first in the basement of the Van Fleet Hall of Science at Wesleyan.

In April of 1961 a constitution was adopted by the 14 charter members, and the Prairie Astronomy Club of Lincoln made its official debut. Charter members were:

Phillip Johnson
Richard Johnson
Tom Pansing
Jess Williams
Pete Schultz
Carroll Moore
Philo Prell
Werner Klammer
Dick Hartley
Eugene Robertson
Walter Erbach
Harlan Franey
Jim Hoskins
Faun Fritz

The meeting place moved from the basement to the upstairs lecture hall of the Van Fleet Building sometime

(Continued on page 6)

FROM THE CLUB ARCHIVES: A COMPLETE LIST OF THE OFFICERS OF THE CLUB,

April, 1961

President-- Tom Pansing
 Secretary-- Jess Williams
 Program Chairmen--Pete Schultz,
 Jim Hoskins

May, 1962

President-- Jess Williams
 Vice President-- Werner Klammer
 Secretary-- Pete Schultz,
 Jim Hoskins
 Treasurer -- John Howe
 Program Chairman --
 Richard Hartley
 Publications Chairman--
 Pete Schultz

March, 1963

President -- Jess Williams
 Vice President -- Earl Moser
 Secretary -- Harlan Franey
 Treasurer -- John Howe
 Program Chairman --
 Richard Hartley
 Publications Chairman -- ?

September, 1964

President -- Richard Hartley
 Vice President --
 Eugene Robertson
 Secretary -- Jess Williams
 Treasurer -- Harlan Franey
 Program Chairman -- Earl Moser
 Publications Chairman -- ?

September, 1965

President -- Earl Moser
 Vice President -- Richard John-

son.

Secretary -- Jess Williams
 Treasurer -- Richard Hartley
 Program Chairman --George Lyber-
 is, Ed Woerner
 Publications Chairman --
 Steve Kunkee, Ed Woerner
 Recording Secretary --
 Steve Kunkee

September, 1966

President -- Earl Moser
 Vice President -- Felix Cavosie
 Secretary -- Jess Williams
 Program Chairman -- ?
 Publications Chairmen-- Scott
 Coatsworth, Monte Cole, Steve Kunkee,
 Larry Stepp
 Recording Secretary--Ed Woerner

October, 1967

President -- Earl Moser
 Vice President--Larry Stepp
 Secretary -- Jess Williams
 Treasurer -- Richard Johnson
 Program Chairman -- Larry Stepp
 Publications Chairmen -- Monte
 Cole, Steve Kunkee
 Recording Secretary--Ed Woerner

October, 1968

President -- Earl Moser
 Vice President -- Monte Cole
 Secretary -- Jess Williams
 Treasurer -- Richard Johnson
 Program Chairman--Carroll Moore
 Publications Chairman -- Monte
 Cole, Roger Severns, Ed Woerner
 Recording Secretary -- Ed Woerner

FROM 1961 THROUGH 1975 -- AND MANY OF THEM ARE STILL ACTIVE MEMBERS!

October, 1969

President -- Earl Moser
 Vice President -- Ed Woerner
 Secretary -- Jess Williams
 Treasurer -- Richard Johnson
 Program Chairman -- Monte Cole
 Publications Chairmen--
 Brian Dodson, Larry Stepp
 Recording Secretary --
 Roger Severns

October, 1970

President -- Earl Moser
 Vice President -- Robert Manthey
 Secretary -- Jess Williams
 Treasurer -- Brian Dodson
 Program Chairman --
 Richard Shellhouse
 Publications Chairman --
 Lawrence Pilgrim
 Recording Secretary--Monte Cole

October, 1971

President -- Earl Moser
 Vice President--Robert Manthey
 Secretary -- Jess Williams
 Treasurer -- Monte Cole
 Program Chairman -- Larry Stepp
 Publications Chairman --
 Ed Woerner
 Recording Secretary--
 Brian Dodson

September, 1972

President -- Earl Moser
 Vice President --
 Dr. Robert Manthey
 Secretary-Treasurer--
 Jess Williams
 Program Chairman --
 Brian Dodson
 Publications--Phil Kelton, Ass-
 isted by Lawrence Pilgrim

September, 1973

President -- Earl Moser
 Vice President --
 Dr. Robert Manthey
 Secretary-Treasurer--
 Jess Williams
 Program Chairman--Jack Dunn
 Publications -- John Bruce

October, 1974

President-- John Bruce
 Vice President -- Donn Baker
 Secretary -- Jess Williams
 Treasurer -- Lee Thomas
 Program Chairman -- Jack Dunn

October, 1975

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