

THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMER

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HOW TO WRITE A CONSTITUTION FOR A CLUB THAT SHOULDN'T HAVE ONE

Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time. A five-man committee labored to produce a constitution for the Prairie Astronomy Club, because the last one anyone could find seemed hopelessly outdated. Now, of course, we know why.

Rick Johnson, who helped to organize the club as a non-profit corporation, told members who attended the February meeting how he was casually glancing through last month's newsletter when he chanced upon the proposed new constitution. Constitution? Wait a minute! A corporation has articles of incorporation --

not a constitution. And, certainly, the Prairie Astronomy Club has a concise, legal, and (to the State of Nebraska) operational set of Articles. Also, according to Rick, the State might become upset if it discovered we had a constitution instead of the hallowed Articles which it stores in some musty vault as evidence of our existence.

Since this whole project began as an effort to revise the club Bylaws, it was agreed at the meeting to incorporate the innovative features of the proposed Constitution into the Bylaws. Rick Johnson, having blown the whistle on the Constitutional Convention, agreed to take on the task of upgrading the Bylaws. His efforts appear starting on page 3 of this newsletter.

Also at the February meeting, Observing Chairman Dave Knisely gave a report on Comet West, and President Earl Moser described the Zodiacal Light which was prominent on several February nights from his observing location west of Hickman.

Larry Stepp reported on the club's Bicentennial Telescope project, displaying the fiberglass tube purchased from Park Corp. Jeff Mal-

NEXT MEETING TO DISCUSS BYLAWS

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

Rick Johnson and Earl Moser both have been snapping away at Comet West with their cameras. Both expect to have some of their pictures ready for the meeting. Members are urged to bring their own photographs of the comet -- prints or slides. With the kind of show West has been putting on in the

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pre-dawn sky, we should have lots of pictures to view.

The March meeting will also include a discussion of the Bylaws which have been proposed for the club. The complete text of the Bylaws begins on page 3 of this newsletter. Read it over in advance of the meeting, and if you have any changes you want to propose, present them Tuesday night, March 30.

Larry Stepp will present the program at the meeting. He'll be talking about how to design a home-built telescope.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT...

Comet West seems to have turned out a bit brighter, and is holding longer than predicted in March Sky & Tel. I first saw it on the morning of March 5 and had time to take only one picture with camera on tripod.

The next morning (Saturday, March 6), I was ready with telescope drive turned on and polar aligned. Rick Johnson and Larry Stepp were out at my place by 4:30 a.m. and Rick and I took several pictures each.

Rick was out again on Sunday morning and we took more pictures. The tail seemed a bit more spread out

on Sunday.

I took more pictures on the morning of the 13th. Since then, the moon has been in the morning sky and so I will wait until March 28, when the moon rises after twilight begins.

Comet West should be good for viewing again for the next couple of weeks. I hope to have pictures back in time for the meeting.

--Earl Moser

JUST WHY DOES THE SUN SPINE?

Two types of solar observation have cast some doubt on universally accepted theories of why the sun shines. The sun's energy source is thought to be the fusion of hydrogen nuclei in its core, resulting in the formation of helium and the release of energy.

One consequence of this reaction should be the production of neutrinos, but attempts to observe them in the numbers required to satisfy the theory have failed. More recently, it has been discovered that the sun appears to pulsate, expanding and contracting by about five miles every two hours and 40 minutes.

One theory to explain these anomalies: that a partial energy source of the sun is a black hole at its center!

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).

PROPOSED NEW BYLAWS WILL BE DISCUSSED AT MARCH MEETING

--Rick Johnson

The Articles of Incorporation of the club give the Board of Directors the power to adopt or amend by By-laws of the club. It has been some time since the Bylaws have been revised and a few changes are needed.

Therefore, a copy of the proposed By-laws as revised is included in this month's newsletter. Read them carefully, as they will be discussed at this month's meeting.

(PROPOSED) BYLAWSName

The name of the Club is Prairie Astronomy Club of Lincoln, Nebraska.

Purpose

The purpose of the Club is to encourage and to participate in the study of astronomy and related subjects for the benefit of its members and of the general public, including but not limited to owning an observatory, telescopes or other instruments or property useful in such studies. No part of its income or net earnings are to inure to the benefit of or be distributable to its members, directors or officers or any private individual.

Procedures

A quorum of one-third of the memberships on the current membership list must be present for a vote to be binding. A Family membership shall count as one membership for this purpose. A simple majority vote of the members present is required except where a two-thirds majority vote has been required by these Bylaws.

When conducting the business of the club, procedural disputes shall be decided by consulting Roberts Rules of Order. All amendments to a motion must be voted upon before the vote on the main motion may be called for.

All regular club meetings shall be open to the general public.

Debts and Obligations

A two-thirds majority vote by a quorum at a regular meeting shall be required to obligate the club for any debt or to increase any outstanding debt. The property of members, directors and officers shall not be liable

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PROPOSED CLUB BYLAWS REVISION, Continued

for payment of the debts and obligations of the club.

Board of Directors

The business of the club shall be managed by a Board of Directors. The Board shall have the power to spend funds from the treasury for any valid purpose. The Board shall create additional non-elective offices as required and initiate impeachment proceedings against officers who have been negligent in performing their duties.

The Board shall consist of the elected officers of the club. Each decision of the Board shall require an affirmative vote of three Board members.

Election of Officers

Five officers shall be elected from the membership: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Program Chairman.

Nominations for the elected officers shall be held during the September meeting and elections held during the October meeting. The term of office for elected and appointed officers shall be from November 1 until October 31 or until a successor is elected. In the event of a vacated elective office a special election will be held to fill that office for the remainder of the term.

Impeachment of any officer shall require a two-thirds majority vote by a quorum of members at a regular meeting. Notice that an impeachment vote is to be held and the name of the officer involved shall be printed in the Prairie Astronomer prior to the meeting.

Non-elected offices shall be shall be qualified club members appointed by the newly-elected President.

Duties of the elected OfficersPresident:

The President shall organize and direct the regular monthly meetings and all other club activities, officially represent the Club at meetings of regional and national importance where he is in attendance or to delegate this authority.

The President shall have the authority to call meetings of the Board of Directors and to appoint non-elected officers.

Vice President:

The Vice President shall be responsible for meetings when the President is absent. He is to be the mediator in cases of procedural dispute, to temporarily assume any duties of any officer at the direction of the President, and to be in charge of club publicity.

Secretary:

The Secretary shall handle all club correspondence and be responsible for the distribution of information received through official club correspondence.

Treasurer:

The Treasurer is responsible for all club funds and for keeping accurate records of all monetary transactions. He shall submit a written report of the club's monetary status at the request of the President, or give a verbal report at the request of any member during regular meetings. He shall also maintain a current inventory of all club property.

Program Chairman:

The Program Chairman shall be responsible for the formation and presentation of monthly club programs.

Duties of Non-Elected OfficersPublications Chairman:

The Publications Chairman is responsible for the editing, publishing, and mailing of the Prairie Astronomer in advance of each monthly meeting.

Recording Secretary:

The Recording Secretary is responsible for keeping the minutes of club meetings and filing a copy with the club Secretary.

Librarian:

The Librarian shall keep the club library and promote its circulation among the club members. Dated records of persons to whom books are circulated are to be kept by the Librarian. He shall keep a current bibliographic listing of all club library materials and file updated copies

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PROPOSED CLUB BYLAWS REVISION, Continued

as necessary with the club Treasurer.

Observing Chairman:

The Observing Chairman shall present a monthly report at club meetings and/or in the Prairie Astronomer. He shall attempt to keep members informed of upcoming celestial events, sky objects of special interest, and star parties.

Membership

There shall be two classes of membership: Individual and Family.

An Individual Membership shall be granted to any individual who has a valid interest in astronomy and the club's activities, upon payment of the proscribed dues. Family Membership shall be granted to any family, the members of which have a valid interest in astronomy and the club's activities, upon payment of the proscribed dues.

Except for voting rights and dues, the rights of the two classes of memberships are identical.

Voting

A paid-up Individual member shall have one vote. A paid-up Family membership shall have two votes when two or more members are present at the time of voting. When only one member of the family is present, he may cast one vote.

A family or individual member must be present in order to cast a vote.

Rights of Members

Each paid-up membership has the right to:

1. Receive a years subscription to Sky & Telescope magazine.
2. Receive notification of all club meetings, activities, and other events occurring in the name of the Club.
3. Initiate and second motions. The President does not have this right.
4. Speak out and be heard during club discussions.
5. Submit for publication articles for the Prairie Astronomer.
6. Submit, without charge, advertisements of relevance for publication in The Prairie Astronomer.
7. Require a reading of the minutes of the last meeting, a Treasurer's

PROPOSED CLUB BYLAWS REVISION, Conclusion

report, or request a secret ballot.

Dues

Dues shall be determined by the club membership and adjusted as required to meet expected expenditures and the cost to the club of Sky and Telescope magazine.

Dissolution

The Club shall not be dissolved so long as five members vote against dissolution. If the Club is dissolved, its assets at the time of dissolution, after payment of liabilities, shall be distributed to Nebraska Wesleyan University, to be used for purposes similar to those of this Club.

COMET WEST -- BRILLIANT, UNEXPECTED MAVERICK -- NOW IS IT COMETS WEST?

Aside from its unanticipated brilliance (consistently one to two magnitudes brighter than initial predictions), Comet West has managed to command the attention of professionals and amateurs with some interesting antics in the morning sky.

Its prominent tail has, on close observation, been seen to include a broad dust tail composed of a number of "synchronic bands", according to Z. Sekanina of the Center for Astrophysics. The bands showed a systematic translational motion of about 1.6° per day and rotated at about 13° per day relative to the faint plasma tail, one of them essentially coinciding with its southern border. On a print obtained March 5, Sekanina noted as many as 20 "synchronic bands", the most distant of which

reached as far as 19 degrees from the nucleus, with the dust tail extending to some 25 degrees. Sekanina explained that the dust tail was composed of postperihelion partial emissions, while a faint section northeast of the nucleus was made up of somewhat heavier particulates emitted during the week before perihelion.

Brian G. Marsden of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory speculated during the week of March 15 that Comet West might have broken up into a main cometary nucleus and as many as three smaller nuclei. Visual observations beginning March 5 indicated secondary nuclei at p.a. 50 degrees, separation 3", magnitude difference 0.5; another at 120 degrees, magnitude 0, no separation

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COMET WEST: COMETS WEST?

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data; and one at 350 degrees, separated by about 4", magnitude difference 0.5.

Reliable estimates on Comet West indicated a magnitude of -3.65 shortly after perihelion on February 26, viewed during daylight. The comet declined to magnitude 0 by March 3, approximately magnitude 1 on March 6, and was still at magnitude 1.8 late on March 8. Original predictions were that West should have been down to magnitude 3.2 on the 8th--so, given its rapid advance into dark skies, providing contrast, and its retained brilliance, Comet West was turning out to be everything Kohoutek wasn't.

LAST MONTH'S MEETING

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latt and Walt Baumann reported they had finished grinding with #600 grit, and were ready to begin polishing the eight-inch mirror.

Jack Dunn, Director of Mueller Planetarium at UNL, described his Backyard Astronomy course, a Community (non-credit) introduction to astronomy which was to begin March 16. Larry Stepp suggested that the club try to arrange a star party for the class to help them find their way around the sky, and possibly gain some new club members.

Another new member was added to the club roster at the last meeting: Mike Larson, 2935 South 44th, Lincoln 68506.

PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB

c/o Lee Thomas

1025 No. 63rd, Apt. B107

Lincoln, Nebraska 68505

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Mr. Earl Moser
Hickman,
Nebraska 68372

9/76

