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# THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMER

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## OBSERVATORY COMMITTEE MAKES ITS PITCH TO COUNCIL: NO MONEY FROM CITY FUNDS

A good turnout of Prairie Astronomy Club members helped to fill the City Council chambers to overflowing on the night of August 12. The occasion was the Lincoln City Council's annual final public budget review, and the club members were there to show their support for the proposed Community Observatory.

Former Nebraska Governor Bob Crosby, Dale Rathe, Science Curriculum Coordinator for the Lincoln Public schools, and Lee Thomas, Station and Program Manager of KLMS, presented the case to the Council. The Observatory Committee, headed by Professor Carroll Moore, has raised almost exactly half of the \$60,000 needed to complete the observatory in Holmes Park.

Anyone following news reports of the city's financial woes could probably have foretold the outcome of our plea for funds: we were not alone. The Council was in no mood to add money to anybody's budget, especially at the last minute for a project that they had had no opportunity to discuss in detail. They listened politely, and, in a later executive session decided, in effect, no way.

With perfect 20/20 hindsight, it is obvious that we should have presented our proposal first to the Mayor. Her budget, after all, is the jumping-off point of most council discussions. And most of the general revenue sharing funds, of which we

were attempting to get an amount earmarked for the observatory, are apportioned in the mayor's budget. At least we would have had the advantage of having presented our case in several courts, and in plenty of time to allow some considered judgment. It was a matter of something less than one hour between first proposal to the council and the time when the Council members were forced to make their final decision. If somebody

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### AUGUST MEETING AT REGULAR PLACE

The regular meeting of the Prairie Astronomy Club will be held at Olin Hall of Science, Nebraska Wesleyan University, at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, August 31.

Program Chairman Jack Dunn promises to recount the highlights of the Planetarium Director's convention held earlier this month in Boulder. Among the speakers at that meeting was the redoubtable (and by now famous) Dr. Carl Sagan, who flew in on his private plane with the latest Mars data from the Viking mission.

Professor Carroll Moore, who also attended that convention, has mentioned the Jefferson County Observatory, which was erected in the hills above Golden, Colorado,

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President's Report

## SKY SHOWS, STAR PARTIES, INTERVIEW AND CLUB PICNIC HIGHLIGHT THE MONTH

My report this month will be a summary of past events and a few upcoming ones.

On August 5th we held our regular Gateway Sky Show. It was cloudy at first, but by 7:30 the skies cleared and we had a good show the rest of the evening. One problem, though. I was the only one there. Lots of viewers, but only one telescope. Let's try to have a bigger turnout of club members at our next Gateway show.

On Wednesday, August 18th, I was interviewed by a reporter from "The Weekender", a supplement for several local weekly newspapers. The story will appear in newspapers on the stands from the 23rd to the 30th. This kind of publicity should be a great help for our club. I will bring a copy to the meeting for all to see.

We had a star party at my place on the 20th. Eight members were out, and several brought telescopes. The skies were clear and all had a good

time seeking out and viewing the favorite deep sky objects.

On August 28th we will have our family picnic and star party. I expect a good turnout from the Omaha and St. Joseph clubs, and I hope that most of our Prairie Astronomy Club members can make it, too. The activities start at 2:00 p.m. and last as long as you want to stay. Bring your family and a couple of potluck items, and a picnic basket. We will eat at 6:00 p.m. Don't forget your telescope. We'll use that as soon as it gets dark. Bring some blankets, too. You may want to just lay back on the ground and look up at the naked-eye splendor of the skies.

At our August meeting we will have nominations for officers for the coming year. Be prepared to nominate the person of your choice (with his consent, of course), for the five officer positions of our club. The Nominating Committee will also present its nominees at this meeting.

-- Earl Moser

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Observing Chairman's Report

## A SWEEPING LOOK AT OUR ARM OF THE MILKY WAY GALAXY THRU YOUR TELESCOPE

This month I found a way to observe the spiral structure of a nearby galaxy. As a matter of fact, the galaxy in question was our own Milky Way Galaxy. One evening as I was visually observing the Milky Way, I noticed a large gap between the nose of Cygnus and the Scutum star cloud. I consulted a 21 cm. radio map of the galaxy and my Skalnate Pleso Star Atlas and found something quite remarkable.

It seems that the spiral arm we are in, the Carina-Cygnus arm, curves around from where we are into northern Cygnus and through the Cygnus star cloud, eventually disappearing behind the Sagittarius-Scutum spiral arm. This occurs at galactic longitude 60 degrees, or at R.A. 20h45min, Dec +22° 10 min., or where the Milky Way starts to darken beyond Alberio.

It appears that this dark spot is the point where our spiral arm curves and goes behind the Sagittarius arm and is obscured by the dust that exists at the edge of the Sagittarius arm. There are several objects in this area that are interesting to observe.

NGC 6853, a planetary nebula known as M27, is a fairly bright and large object that is not terribly difficult to find, being about 3½ degrees north of Gamma Sagittarii. This object can be seen with instru-

ments as small as a 2.4 inch refractor or as a rectangular patch, and larger instruments show the dumbbell form of this nebula along with faint flowing details.

A challenge for small to medium size telescopes is NGC 6838, M71. It is a scattered globular cluster which is slightly difficult to resolve. It is located between Gamma and Delta Sagittarii and almost borders another object, M20, an open cluster.

As a final object, this one for binoculars or richfield telescopes, is NGC 6940, a large open cluster near the Veil Nebula, about 5½ degrees south and 2½ degrees west of Epsilon Cygni.

-- David Knisely

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 COUNCIL REFUSES EXTRA MONEY FOR  
 COMMUNITY OBSERVATORY PROJECT

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asked you to decide whether to give them \$30,000, and you had to make up your mind in one hour, and you were confronted by a roomful of taxpayers who wanted to hold down spending, what would you have done?

The observatory committee will meet in early September to determine a plan of action to solicit further contributions. We have little doubt that the observatory can be built--it is simply a question of how soon, and for how much.

## AUGUST 31 MEETING RETURNS TO OLD STOMPING GROUNDS AT OLIN HALL

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with the help of the Kiwanis Club. He says there are many design similarities between this observatory and the proposed Holmes Park Community Observatory. He will describe the Colorado facility, its uses and financing.

Also at the August meeting, names will be placed in nomination for the club's five elective offices: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Program Chairman. The Nominating Committee will present its slate of candidates as usual, but individual members are encouraged to place other names in nomination. The election will be held at the September meeting.

Jack Dunn reminds everyone that programs will be needed for the September and October meetings. If you've been working on a project this summer, other than getting a suntan, you might want to describe it to the club as part of a program. See Jack at the meeting.

Don't forget the annual star party and picnic. (See last month's issue for directions.) Time: 2:00 p.m. till who-knows-when, Saturday, August 28, Wagontrain Lake, east of Hickman. Surely with all the hot dry weather we've been having, the likelihood of rain is roughly the same as being hit in the eye by a meteorite.

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