

THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMER

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ELECTION OF OFFICERS IS RESCHEDULED FOR OCTOBER CLUB MEETING

Members who were present at last month's meeting -- and there weren't very many of them--know that scheduled elections were postponed to the October meeting. Because terms of office begin November 1, the election must be held this month, regardless of attendance at the meeting. So all members are urged to be at Olin Hall Tuesday night, October 26, at 7:30 p.m.

No additional names were placed in nomination for the offices available in the club at the last meeting. The slate proposed by the Nominating Committee stands for election, but more names can be submitted in advance of the voting. The proposed slate of candidates is:

President -- Larry Stepp
Vice President -- Rick Johnson
Secretary -- Dr. Robert Manthey
Treasurer -- Lee Thomas*
Program Chairman -- Jack Dunn*

(*indicates incumbent)

Jack Dunn will be teaching the last session of his Backyard Astronomy class the night of the meeting, but he will be sending along two films for us to choose from for the program: "Project Helios", or "Opportunities In Space", both from NASA.

There will be a short meeting of the Executive Committee at 7:15 p.m., prior to the club meeting. The pub-

lishers of the Mid States Region newsletter have informed the editor of The Prairie Astronomer that an assessment of 50¢ per member for each of the 64 listed members of the Prairie Astronomy Club is to be made to cover costs of producing and mailing the Midstates newsletter. This amounts to \$32 for the current year, and since no provision has been made for this expense in the present membership dues, a decision must be made by the Executive Committee either to raise membership dues to cover the midstates newsletter, or to decline club participation in this project.

CLUB ACTIVITIES INCLUDE SKYSHOW

A Gateway Sky Show was held two days after last month's meeting, with a better-than-average turnout of telescopes...five in all. The night was clear, and Larry Stepp reports many Gateway shoppers took the opportunity to look at the sky.

The club also fielded five telescopes at the University of Nebraska on October 5 for Jack Dunn's Backyard Astronomer's class.

The planned Star Watch on Tuesday night, October 19, at Holmes Park succumbed to dismal gray skies, which occasionally spat the first snow-flakes of the season, and a cold north wind that drove temperatures to the freezing mark.

OBSERVING CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: HEADING INTO WINTER SKYWATCHING

To start with, there are a few globular clusters of note. In Pegasus, NGC 7078 (M15) is just visible to the naked eye and is an interesting object showing many stars in an 8-inch telescope. It is located $2\frac{1}{2}$ degrees north and $3\frac{1}{2}$ degrees west of Epsilon Pegasi. The other globular cluster is NGC 7089 (M2) and it is also a bright object. It shows many stars in a telescope of 8 inches aperture, and is located 4.75 degrees north and $\frac{1}{2}$ degree east of Beta Aquarii.

A fainter object, but still worthy of note is NGC 7099 (M30) which can be at least partially resolved by a large telescope. It is located about $\frac{3}{4}$ degree south and $3\frac{1}{2}$ degrees east of Zeta Capricorni. For those who like large planetary nebulae, NGC 7293 is probably one of the largest in the sky. It is 15 by 12 minutes of arc in size, and should be viewed at the lowest possible power in a telescope of at least six inches aperture. It shows some structure in large instruments, and is one of the nearest known planetary nebulae.

In Pegasus again there are a few interesting objects that can be observed with moderate instruments. NGC 7479 is a faint galaxy three degrees due south of Beta Pegasi, and

can be seen in an 8-inch with ease. In Andromeda, things get a bit more interesting as we find NGC 7662, a planetary nebula in the northernmost part of the constellation near I3 Andromedae, or about one degree south and two degrees west of Iota Andromedae. It is rather small, but interesting in form.

--David Knisely

SOVIETS: SPACESHIP FROM ANOTHER WORLD CAUSED SIBERIAN BLAST

Moscow (UPI)-- A nuclear-powered space ship made by "beings from other worlds" may have crashed in Central Siberia 68 years ago, causing an explosion 2,000 times stronger than the first atom bomb, a Soviet scientist says.

Alexei Zolotov told the Soviet News Agency Tass he was almost certain the tremendous blast on June 30, 1908 was of nuclear origin.

"He assumes that the body which ripped into the earth's atmosphere might have been of artificial origin, that is, it might have been a craft made by intelligent beings from other worlds of the universe," Tass said.

The explosion in a remote river valley in Tunguskaj, Central Siber-

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SOME (RANDOM) NOTES FROM YOUR TRAVELLING EDITOR...

As I noted in last month's newsletter, I was off on a junket to Washington at the end of September. It was business, but I always manage to snooker the company into footing the bill for some sightseeing along the way.

This time, I spent very nearly a full day at the new Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum. And, it was hardly enough time. The place is crammed literally to the rafters with just about every significant artifact of man's voyage into the heavens that is worth looking at ...and quite a few that, in one man's opinion, aren't.

We concentrated on the exhibits that had to do with space flight, and the selection was incredible. Paramount Pictures donated the original model of Star Trek's Enterprise, which dangles above the entranceway to an alcove devoted to extraterrestrial life. (A close look at the model, by the way, reveals how little detail is actually necessary for a process shot that meets television's limited requirements. You could probably whittle a more convincing replica with a pocketknife.)

The Apollo - Soyuz is there...the actual backup ships (the Russian vessel is on loan from the Soviet Academy of Sciences), the moon lander (again, the backup LEM that never flew), plus the Skylab, and actual production models of virtually every satellite ever sent into space, with the possible exception of those with classified missions.

Doctor Goddard's original rocket,

an actual German V-2, plus engines from every significant stage in American rocketry are on display. There is certainly no place on earth that can match the Air & Space Museum in collecting together in one small space the hardware of space travel. We journeyed to NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, which is outside Washington at Greenbelt, Maryland, just to see what NASA might be showing the public. And the answer is, not much. The only thing of consequence was a firsthand look at the control center for Satellite Tracking Operations, but even that was manned by a very few bored-looking people who obviously didn't have much going on that day.

Back at Air & Space, we viewed the premier presentation in the Space Theater, "To Fly", which runs about 40 minutes. The material is not particularly astounding, being a brief history of man's attempts to soar, but the Imax projection process is absolutely incredible. Utilizing a horizontal, rather than vertical, axis 70 mm film, Imax throws a picture almost five stories high on a screen that manages to engulf the viewer.

With Imax, and all those displays the Air & Space Museum is a must for visitors to Washington, D.C.

You may have caught the UPI story out of Moscow (see page 2), in which Alexei Zolotov, a Soviet scientist,

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FOR SALE: German Equatorial mount. 1½-inch shaft, bronze bearings, complete with pedestal, legs, no clock drive. \$70. Larry Stepp.

SOVIETS: SPACE SHIP EXPLOSION

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ia, was heard hundreds of miles away. The earth shuddered so violently that horses pulling ploughs 240 miles away were hurled to the ground.

Scientists have said the force of the blast was 20 to 40 million tons of TNT, or up to 2,000 times greater than the atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945.

There has been much speculation as to what caused the explosion, with theories ranging from the collision with the earth of a "black hole"--matter so dense it drags in every particle around it -- to a crashing meteorite or comet.

But Zolotov's theory was the first widely publicized view that the blast was nuclear and may have been caused by an alien space ship.

NOTES FROM WANDERING EDITOR

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announced his conclusion that the great Tunguska explosion of 1908 was the result of a nuclear-powered spaceship destroying itself over Siberia.

Anyone who is interested might want to get hold of a little book called "The Fire Came By: The Riddle of the Great Siberian Explosion", by John Baxter and Thomas Atkins (Doubleday, 1976, \$7.95.) I found it to be quick, interesting reading, although occasionally repetitive when it came to filling in gaps in knowledge about the explosion.

They cite evidence that the object changed its flight path prior to exploding, and that there was definite evidence of radioactivity at the explosion site. This is no "Chariots of the Gods." -- Lee Thomas

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