



The Prairie Astronomer

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At Last Month's Meeting...

The November meeting officially began the new term of office for PAC officers. President Russ Genzmer began the meeting with a description of what he hopes can be accomplished by the club in the 1982 year. Included in the President's goals were: the relocation and organization of the club library, having observing contests at the monthly star parties, sessions for beginners in astronomy to help in their acquaintance with astronomical terms and the night sky, as well as many other ambitious ideas.

Walt Baumann gave club members a few tips on writing letters to our governmental representatives. It was mentioned that a good letter includes more than just "I support the space program." Include your ideas on what can be done and how it can be accomplished.

UFO's seem to be in the news again as various members related being called to explain that Venus and a fairly large fireball were not in fact galactic visitors looking for earthly representatives.

Four great door prizes were given away and programs began which included a Lincolnfest slide-tape show, a report by Rick Johnson and Russ Copple

on the shuttle launch, a videotape on the launch, and finally a report by Jack Dunn on the Omnisphere in Hutchinson, Kansas. Ann Kelly also donated her time and provided an assortment of astronomy books for display from the Nebraska Bookstore.

December Meeting

The December meeting of the Prairie Astronomy Club will be held at Hyde Observatory on Tuesday, the 29th of December, at 7:30 p.m. This month's programs will include a special videotape of the shuttle launch provided by Rick Johnson, the latest theories on the Star of Bethlehem presented by Jack Dunn, and a special holiday movie (back by popular demand), called "Hardware Wars."

No doubt there will be more fantastic door prizes this month as well as post-meeting refreshments --so be sure to attend!

(See separate story on Page 3 about the arrival of RASC Handbooks, and non-arrival of Wonders of the Universe Calendars.)

President's Message:

First off, thanks go out to John Lortz for a fine first program as Program Chairman. Ambitious, to say the least! Also to Ann Kelly. Part of the "many" programs last month was a book display put on by Ann. I can imagine from the looks of it that it was quite a job, and it is appreciated.

Lee Thomas, our Treasurer, informs me that we have been contacted by another one of those "newly initiated" groups to further the goals of Space Science. The World Space Foundation is seeking asteroid helpers and hunters for their asteroid project. I'll touch on this more at the meeting.

I hope those of you who stated interest in writing letters to Washington in support of our space science programs are doing so. If any have received replies, please share them with us at the meeting. Walt Baumann may have more insight into further budget cutting of these programs at the meeting.

I also would like to bring some cards to the meeting to have all members fill out. Fill out with what, you ask? I think it would be a good idea to find out what everyone's strengths and weaknesses are. And then how the club could help. If some of us out there have an interest in a certain phase of Astronomy, but not the experience, those with the expertise could share that in the form of a program during the meetings.

Let's not let our experience or our want of knowledge set out there dormant. We also need to start thinking about Astronomy Day for '82. So bring some preliminary ideas along to the meeting.

-- RUSS GENZMER

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OBSERVING CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Start your New Year's observing with the open cluster NGC 752 located three degrees north and two degrees west of Beta Trianguli. The cluster has about 70 stars spread over a degree or so of field. For a more difficult target, try the edge-on spiral galaxy NGC 891, located about three degrees east of Gamma Andromedae. This spiral is a test object for a six-inch telescope, appearing as an irregular faint spindle. Larger instruments will begin to show the irregular dark lanes running the length of the galaxy.

Novices who try for the Crab Nebula usually fail or come away disappointed. The object can be seen with a 2.4-inch refractor as a very faint patch of light located one degree northwest of Zeta Tauri, but most people expect to see a detailed mass of nebulosity. I have seen the nebula with telescopes as large as 30 inches, and I have not seen any of the filaments shown in the photographs.

If you want something a bit more satisfying, try the Orion Nebula. To really get the most out of the view, spend at least 15 minutes in total darkness and then use a black cloth to screen out any ambient light. This is rather effective in bringing out the fainter details of the nebula. Those with eight-inch or larger instruments should have little trouble seeing the loop of nebulosity which extends south to envelope Iota Orionis. Those with smaller telescopes

should try the open cluster NGC 2244, a beautiful cluster of fairly bright stars located two degrees east of Epsilon Monocerotis. Those with large telescopes may see some faint nebulosity surrounding these stars. This is the famous Rosette Nebula.

For those who like globular clusters, M79 should prove a challenge. Located about four degrees south and one degree west of Beta Leporis, it appears as a bright ball of haze in most instruments although high power on an eight-inch telescope will show some stars on the fringes.

For those who feel a bit "chilled" by winter observing, I would suggest coming out to the star parties at Earl Moser's house. Usually someone brings something hot to drink, and if you're still cold you can duck inside and warm up a bit. But if you don't come, you'll be missing some of the best sights the winter sky has to show.

--DAVE KNISELY

GOOD NEWS-- AND BAD NEWS

First, the good news: The RASC Observers Handbooks have arrived, and those who purchased them should be certain to put in an appearance at the December meeting to get theirs. (As with all good news, it isn't all good: Your treasurer goofed in plac-

(Continued on Page 4)

The Good News and The Bad News--and Everything In Between

(Continued from Page 3)

ing the order. Instead of the 12 handbooks needed to fulfill the purchases, only 10 were ordered. Since a re-order at the same price is not possible, your Treasurer is foregoing his copy and accepting a refund. He is looking for one other person who purchased a Handbook and has since decided that the \$5.00 is more valuable. A refund will be happily extended to such a volunteer in lieu of handbook at the December meeting.)

So much for what I did to botch things up at this end. Now, for the Bad News: Hansen Planetarium did ship 10 calendars, and we did receive them in time for distribution to

those who made purchases, at the December meeting. Unfortunately, they are not the right calendars. We have 10 Kitt Peak calendars, not Wonders of the Universe calendars. Hansen has been duly informed of this problem, but seeing as how it took them two full months to (incorrectly) fill our order in the first place, chances of getting the correct calendars much before Miss January and Miss February have been passed by (Oops! --Sorry!-Wrong calendar!) are nill.

This debacle will undoubtedly elicit some discussion at the December meeting, so come prepared to fulminate fully on the subject.

--LEE THOMAS

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