



The Prairie Astronomer

3-82

Volume 22, Number 3
March 30, 1982

IF YOU MISSED OUR LAST MEETING...

The Observatory Supervisors met and recommended that the \$100 donated to the club be used to purchase a telephone answering device for the observatory. Dave Knisely made the motion, which was seconded and carried by a voice vote.

The unit has now been purchased, and should be installed within the next couple of weeks. A two-minute message will then confront anyone who calls the observatory telephone number (489-0764). It will include the hours of the next public night, the sights to be seen and slide shows running, how to get to the observatory, and how to arrange for private groups to use the facility. In addition, we will have some information on current sky phenomena, such as the so-called Jupiter Effect line-up of planets about which so many telephone calls were received. The device will be especially handy when a fast-appearing phenomenon occurs, and the public calls to get quick information on what it is and how to view it.

The observatory telephone number, which has not been listed in the telephone directory because there was no regular staff present to answer it, will be listed in the December, 1982 phone book. We expect this addition to our tools significantly to improve public awareness of the facility (although, there are times when people are almost too aware of it, as with

the recent glut of visitors occasioned by newspaper and broadcast stories about the impending End of the World.

April 17 is our official date for Lincoln Astronomy Day, it being the only date that seems not to conflict with anything. Brian Schaaf volunteered to make the sign for the main display and to set up a display featuring the development and operation of the observatory.

Members are asked to write a letter encouraging use of the ASP newspaper column to:

Mr. Gilbert M. Savery,
Managing Editor
The Lincoln Journal
926 P Street
Lincoln, NE 68508

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March Meeting

The March meeting of the Prairie Astronomy Club will be held Tuesday, March 30 at 7:30 p.m. at Hyde Observatory. Jack Dunn will be presenting this month's program, which will include the new space shuttle slide-tape show for the observatory, plus "Universe Games", which will answer everything you wanted to know about the universe, but were afraid to ask. Ron Veys visited the Manned Spacecraft Center at Houston last week, and he will have slides of his adventures, too.

President's Message:

This month's message is being written somewhat earlier than most, as I will be in Hawaii the last part of March. I'm hoping I will be able to get to Mauna Kea Observatory sometime during my stay, but I can't guarantee it.

In the past we seem always to have had something negative to remark about in regards to either the space program or professional astronomy. But this time it appears (and I stress the word "appears") we have several positive things.

Number 1 is the apparent decision of the Air Force not to locate a new air base right at the Kitt Peak Observatory complex's door step. If you are not familiar with that situation, you can consult Sky & Telescope or Astronomy several issues back.

The second positive thing is that NASA has apparently received an 11% increase in Shuttle funding. Now, I know that most of that has come about because of the project's increased attractiveness to the military, but money is money at this stage of the game.

I hope that those of you who have stated an interest in helping with some of the display work for the upcoming Astronomy Day observance have been getting in contact with John Lortz, our Program Chairman. We hope to have some good things to present to the public on April 17th.

At last head count, we have not lost anyone from drifting off into space because of increased gravitational pull from the "planet alignment." Although I, for one, did put weights on my shoes last March 10. See you at the meeting.

-- RUSS GENZMER

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OBSERVING CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Turn your telescope into the Northern sky for the large galaxy M101, located five degrees east and a bit south of Mizar (Xi Ursa Majoris). The galaxy is fairly bright but its large size makes it difficult to see clearly in anything less than a four-inch, unless extremely low power is used. It takes at least a ten-inch and very good transparency to see the faint details in the haze surrounding the nucleus, and even then the view is far from spectacular. Somewhat easier to see is M51, the Whirlpool Galaxy. Located about three degrees southwest of Eta Ursa Majoris, the galaxy can be seen with a large pair of binoculars or a small (2.4-inch) telescope as two patches of light, one with a faint disk of haze around it. The patch of light without the haze is the main galaxy's companion NGC 5195. Hints of spiral structure can be seen with an eight-inch telescope on a good night.

In Coma Berenices, look two and one-half degrees east of fifth magnitude 12 Comae Berenices for the edge-on spiral galaxy NGC 4565. Visible in a four-inch, the galaxy shows up as a narrow spindle of light with a pronounced nuclear bulge at the center. A long dark lane extending the length of the galaxy is an area known as "The Realm of the Galaxies," located directly between the stars Beta Leonis and Epsilon Virginis. With my eight-inch, I can see at least 10 galaxies in a one-degree field at the center of the "Realm", and I can't go a degree in any direction without

seeing at least one galaxy. Many Messier objects lurk here, so those with small to moderate telescopes should look carefully here.

Tired of galaxies? Then try the two globulars M53 and NGC 5053 about a degree and a half east of Alpha Comae Berenices. An eight-inch shows some hints of resolution at the edges of these two clusters. A better globular cluster is M3 located about six degrees east and one-half degree north of Beta Comae Berenices. It resolves in a six-inch into a tightly-packed ball of stars and is a glorious sight in an eight-inch.

--DAVID KNISELY

Hutchinson Expedition II

Plans are jelling for a repeat visit to the Cosmosphere in Hutchinson, Kansas. Apparently everyone who went last year had a good time, and vowed to go back when the displays were more complete. The dates this year are April 3-4, by car caravan, as before. A block of modestly priced motel rooms has been reserved. (Although, word has it that they are not quite as modestly priced as last year, but, then, these rooms will have running water, and there is a rumor that there is even a paved sidewalk leading out back to the little shack with the half-moon cut in the door. For city dwellers, the latter is not a small observatory,

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Hutchinson Trip, *from Page 3*

despite the signage.)

Full details will be discussed at the March meeting, with Tour Guide Jack Dunn making attempts to organize the wagons into some semblance of a caravan.

AT LAST MONTH'S MEETING...

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Astronomical Society of the Pacific furnishes the column to newspapers for a nominal cost to run weekly, usually in Sunday editions. It takes a groundswell of public support to convince media that there is enough interest to warrant buying something like this, much less devoting regular space to it. So, write a short note to Mr. Savery in your own words to help the cause. (We are not entirely

unselfish in our motivations here, since many newspapers follow the ASP column with information on local Astronomy club meetings in their areas. And in this area, we is it!)

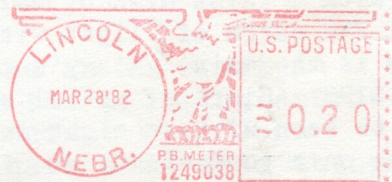
Quick News Notes...

TELESCOPE MAKING MAGAZINES arrived for the last meeting (issue #14.) If you subscribe, pick up your copy at the March meeting, please!

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WELCOME BACK TO THE FOLD, former member John Johnson, who lives in Omaha. He was a member of the Omaha Astronomical Society, but has rejoined our club because the OAS meetings conflicted with his Naval Reserve Training.

The Prairie Astronomer
c/o PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB, INC.
P.O. Box 80553
Lincoln, NE 68501



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