The Prairie Astronomer

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7-82

RECAP: THE GREAT LUNAR ECLIPSE OF '82

Once again, the public was media primed. Astronomers and planetarium directors had been duly interviewed and quoted on the momentous events that were to occur in the wee morning hours of July 6 as earth's companion was scheduled to venture into the dank innermost recesses of the mother planet's shadow. The Prairie Astronomy Club's professional members were again in the forefront as the microphones, cameras and note pads were trotted out. Ed Schmidt, Jack Dunn, Carroll Moore all dutifully recited the celestial mechanics involved, enunciating the reasons for the eclipse's unique predicted darkness, and perhaps an extraordinary redness due to volcanic dust in the atmosphere. They assured concerned parents everywhere that, yes, it was safe to view this eclipse with the naked eye, and no, blindness would not result...or madness either, for that matter.

An air of expectation settled over the Independence Day holiday-exhausted populace. Fireworks were a mere (albeit City Council-Mayor- enforced shadow of their former selves) prologue to the promised spectacle in the skies. The scene was set. Could it have been otherwise?

The clouds rolled in with uncanny timing. Thick, globby black patches of unyielding humidity coalesced into an impenetrable layer, through which not so much as a hint of the slowly darkening lunar disc manifested itself. At Midland College, Gary Carlson, professor of astronomy, noted in an interview that visitors to Lueninghoener Planetarium saw "three hours of lightning", but not a hint of the moon. Similar reports from stoicly philosophical midland observers flowed in on the morning after the "big show."

Robert Manthey, however, was quoted in the *Omaha World-Herald* as sta-

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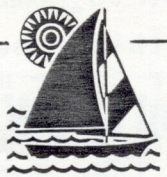

July Meeting

The July meeting of the Prairie Astronomy Club will be held at Hyde Observatory on July 27th at 7:30pm. This month's program will consist of a video tape movie made in 1979 entitled "SPACE MOVIE". It concerns itself mainly with the Apollo 11 flight and footage from the space lab. Some of these shots you might not have seen before, so be sure to attend!

(For other business highlights of this month's meeting, see your President's Message inside on Page 2.)

President's Message:

This month's meeting finds several important things to cover. One means work, and the other means play.

The first thing we need to discuss is the painting of the trim around the observatory. This needs to be done soon and, of course, we need some volunteers to help out.

The other topic is our annual Star Party & Picnic for this year. For the new members, this is a time in which we gather, usually at Wagon Train Lake near Hickman, for a combination star party and picnic. We share observations, stories (both tall and short, mostly the former) and general good time. We also try to schedule it around the Perseid meteor shower (which peaks the 12th of August). So, with clear skies (save for the half moon) we can look forward to a good time.

Recently, I had four new neighbors move in next to me. All were young college women who, after three consecutive nights of watching a "peeping tom" skulk around the yard till all hours of the night, started leaving their patio floodlight on all night to combat him.

Unfortunately, this "peeping tom" was "peeping star gazer" (me). So, after three more nights of their leaving the patio lights on all night, I thought it was time to confront this problem face to faces. So, after explaining the situation to them, they not only shut off all lights, but come out to join me occasionally. The moral--I hope all of you can solve your light pollution problems as amicably as I did.

See you at the meeting.

--RUSS GENZMER

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OBSERVING CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Start your August observing with the open cluster NGC-I4665 located just over a degree northeast of Beta Ophiuchi. It is large and bright even in small telescopes. Moving into Scutum, look for NGC-6704, a small open cluster two-thirds of the way from Eta to Beta Scuti. A degree south of it is M11, the magnificent open cluster that shows about 200 stars in my eight-inch. If you want to see a really red star, look about a degree east of i Aquilae. It is probably a red dwarf and its color is even more striking than that of Antares. Those with larger instruments should look about 1½ degrees north and half a degree east of the fifth magnitude star 22 Aquilae for NGC 6781, a large but faint planetary nebula. In my eight-inch it looked about the size of the ring nebula and at least two magnitudes fainter. Back in Ophiuchus look at 70 Ophiuchi, a pretty fourth magnitude double star that resolves nicely in a 2.4-inch refractor and ranks as one of the nearest stars (17 light years away).

In Sagittarius, M8 is probably the only galactic nebula, other than the great Orion nebula, visible in a 2.4-inch refractor with ease. Those with larger telescopes should try 50 to 100 power on this object, as some faint dark lanes are visible in the main gas cloud. Just over a degree north of M8 are M20 and M21. M20 is the famous Trifid nebula, showing a star with a circular haze of light around it and 3 dark lanes radiating from the central star. There is also another patch of nebulosity adjacent to the main nebula visible clearly in an 8-inch. I doubt seriously whether the nebula can be seen at all in telescopes smaller than six inches. For you galaxy lovers, look 1½ degrees north and ½ degree east of e Sagittarii for NGC 6822, a dwarf galaxy which may be a satellite of our own Milky Way galaxy. It is fairly large, so use very low power. It appears as an irregular haze with a few stars in it. A degree north of this faint galaxy is the tiny planetary, NGC 6818, visible in a three-inch. My eight shows it as a tiny circular disk with a darker center at 250 power, rather like a miniature version of the Ring nebula in Lyra. Watch carefully because at low power it looks very star-like.

--DAVID KNISELY

Who's In Charge Here?

Here is the next month's schedule of Hyde Observatory supervisors:

SAT JULY 31 -- MERTON SPRENGEL
SUN AUGUST 1-- RUSS GENZMER

SAT AUGUST 7-- LEE THOMAS
SUN AUGUST 8-- JACK DUNN

SAT AUGUST 14--CARROLL MOORE
SUN AUGUST 15--TRIXIE SCHMIDT

SAT AUGUST 21--RON VEYS
SUN AUGUST 22--CARROLL MOORE

SAT AUGUST 28--ANN KELLEY
SUN AUGUST 29--TO BE ANNOUNCED

Lunar Eclipse of '82

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ting that about 50 Lincolnites were able to catch about 15 minutes of the eclipse at Hyde Observatory shortly after 3 a.m. And Ron Veys, no doubt suffering from a combination of observer fatigue and LANS (Low Atmosphere Nebulosity Syndrome-- an affliction contracted by Midland observers this year after experiencing 6 consecutive New Moon periods of unrelenting thunderstorms) claims to have discovered, in the course of the bemirked eclipse, a method for seeing through clouds! He is scheduled to deliver a short scientific treatise, including slides ostensibly taken through clouds during the aforementioned eclipse, at the coming meeting ...provided they don't catch him in a butterfly net before he reaches the Observatory.

What is Quasar Fuzz?

J. Anthony Tyson of Bell Laboratories reported to the Astronomical Society of the Pacific that his analyses of the quasar 3C273 indicates that the starlike luminosity that surrounds it is a galaxy, instead of some sort of intervening object that lies between us and the quasar. Thus, for this object at least, he believes there is no gravitational lensing. Such lensing would suggest that the quasar's light was bent in its course to earth by a very dense galaxy along the light path. Tyson's research, however, turned up the odd fact that 3C273 lies about 10 kiloparsecs away from its galaxy center.

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