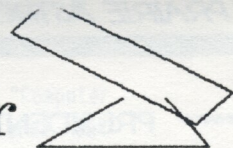


# The Prairie Astronomer



Lincoln Ne.

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A report by the telescope committee chaired by Ron Veys was presented at the last meeting. Following are the results. It was put forth that the club telescope should be rented to members for a small fee per month. This rental fee would help with purchasing new eyepieces, service to the scope, accessories etc.

The main point of the telescope is to make it easy to use for the members. The design of the scope should make it portable, easy to fit in most any size of car. Light weight yet durable. Easy to set up and use for our junior members or those with little or no experience. Should have a fast set up time for single persons use.

No setting circles or clock drive at this time. It should include a large finder scope. Dobsonian mount with no polar alignment aid. A compromise F ratio of F6 will allow both planetary and deep sky observation that will gradually work into more advanced observing.

The telescope is planned for spring completion date. Some of the clubs funds may be needed for the finder and focuser.

Spare parts and eyepieces will be graciously accepted by the members and community.

Those that have ideas on the above information or new ideas should report them to Ron Veys-464-1449.

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Your observing chairman David Knisely, KA0CZC, did get to at least hear Dr. Owen Garriot W5LFL in the Space Shuttle Columbia during STS-9. He will bring a recording of what he heard to the club meeting along with an explanation of how he did it. He won't know whether he actually contacted Dr. Garriot for several months due to the fact that Owen just recorded all the calls to the spacecraft rather than acknowledging them directly.

For those of you who have the Timex/Sinclair 1000 computer, I have written several programs that are somewhat useful in amateur astronomy. These programs include Sidereal Time calculation, reduction of coordinates to a particular epoch, telescope performance, and a limiting logging program. I also know where you can get a fantastic spacecraft tracking program from the Amateur Satellite Corporation AMSAT. For more information contact me at a meeting.

David Knisely



## \*\*\*\*\* PRESIDENTS MESSAGE \*\*\*\*\*

So, a new year for the PAC has begun, and from the positive feedback I've received in the short time I've been in office the upcoming year looks to be exciting indeed. I just finished compiling the data from the questionnaire you all graciously completed at the last meeting. Many of the answers you gave I expected, but there were a few which came as a surprise. I'll share the ideas and views you had at the next meeting.

I hope all of you have placed the PAC membership list in an accessible place so that as ideas pop into your head during the month you can get ahold of one of the officers and let them know. I'm sure Andy is sitting by the phone waiting for your call on doing a program. Please feel free to call any of us anytime. You can even call me collect if you wish!

Well, it's that time of year when we send our Christmas cards and pass along our holiday best wishes. Since my Christmas budget only allows me a few cards I'll send my holiday greetings to all of you here. Happy Holidays and the best to each of you for the coming year. See you at the meeting...

John Lortz

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The Prairie Astronomer is published monthly by the Prairie Astronomy Club.

Membership structure--

1. Newsletter subscriber only, \$6.00 per year. Over 21 years of age no club voting privileges (Newsletter only)
2. Junior Member, \$6.00 21 years of age and less. Receives newsletter, voting privileges. No magazine subscription discount through club.
3. Regular Member \$19.00, receives newsletter, voting privileges, Sky and Telescope subscription with dues through club. No age restriction.
4. Family members \$21.00, same as regular member, but receives 2 votes in elections etc.

Numbers 2,3,4 of above also can receive as an elective, Astronomy magazine through the club at \$12.00 per year. Address membership renewals to: Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc. PO box 80553, Lincoln Ne. 68501 Address all articles for inclusion in the Newsletter to Russ Benzmer 5301 So. 30th Lincoln Ne. 68516. All articles should be received 10 days before club meeting date.



Starting next month I will be devoting a small part of the newsletter to the "Computer Corner". This will be short articles on advice, tips, and general discussion on computers. But be warned this will not be just devoted to computers in astronomy. It will be tips and advice on computers for home and general use too. I'm still not convinced you can justify a computer dedicated to astronomy uses only. So you will have to be aware of its other uses also. Its strong and weak points, its advantages and disadvantages.

Also be aware that since this column will be produced by the newsletter editor I'm solely responsible for its content. It will reflect my tastes and not necessarily those of the club. I will help to dispel some myths about computers in general and also how they pertain to astronomy. Do away with the conceptions, misconceptions, high expectations, low realizations, and all other hype characteristics that go along with the whirlwind courtship we Americans have with this high technology called micro computers.

Of course the space can always be used as rebuttal by those with an opposite view. You do realize that there is a good chance my word processor may bomb during the editing of your rebuttal and it may never make it to print.

Russ Genzmer

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I do need to get the money from all those that have standing orders for Telescope Making magazine. Astro media is raising "h". So please make restitution next meeting. Thanks..

Russ Genzmer

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Production on our 8" mirror we won as a door prize will start after the holidays. Ron Veys tells me he will have the committee whipped together and cranking out design ideas shortly. A focal length of f6 was chosen.

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Our club President John Lortz would like to call a Board of Directors meeting at 7:00 right before the regular meeting at 7:30. So all Directors please be there.

### \*\*\*\*\* This Month's Meeting \*\*\*\*\*

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At this month's meeting (weather permitting) the program will be "Deep Sky; What's in it for You?", presented by your's truly. It will cover the basics of deep sky viewing as well as presenting a few of my "fabulous fakes", the infamous homegrown deep sky photographs that had the club buzzing a few years ago. The program should help dispel a few of the myths about deep



sky observing and at the very least, will give some of you a chance to sleep while I babble on and show my slides (no snoring please!).

Many of you may be considering upgrading your observing equipment through the addition of a large Dobsonian telescope. These huge altazimuth mounted Newtonians are easy to transport and setup, and have the big advantage of great light gathering power in a moderate sized package. The bottom line with telescopes is cost, and the Dobsonian is a fairly low priced alternative to the big, heavy Newtonians of past years. They are fairly easy to build in the home and repairs or modifications are simple to do. In short, Dobsonians seem to be a good buy.

However, they do have their problems. First, since they are altazimuthly mounted, tracking objects at high power can be more difficult than with equatorially mounted clock driven telescopes. They are usually of a low f/ratio and thus perform well only with the better (and more expensive) orthoscopic eyepieces. The commercially made Dobsonians generally use a relatively thin primary mirror which can sag (unless well supported at the rear) and this may impair their high power performance. This, when combined with the inexpensive Kellner eyepieces usually supplied with some factory built Dobsonians, can result in poor image quality and disappointing performance. At low power, the coma in one of these big scopes is severe and will result in streaky elongated star towards the edge of the field of view.

Thin mirrors are also difficult to figure properly and a few people have complained of poor optical performance in a few of the factory built Dobsonians. Thus, as usual, let the buyer beware!

My advice to those building Dobsonians is to get a good commercially figured thick mirror, support it and the secondary well, and get at least one good orthoscopic eyepiece. Have a happy holiday season.

David Knisely



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