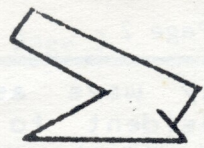




The Prairie Astronomer

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Read any good books lately? Want to find out what really happened to the space shuttle? How engine explosions and cost overruns threatened the very existence of the shuttle program? Then read *The Voyages of Columbia* by Richard S. Lewis. This book reveals in graphic detail the genesis of the space shuttle and its subsequent development through its first seven flights. It shows how NASA almost blew it several times with much of the text reading like one of the recent Nebraska football games!

The engines failed time and time again, the tiles wouldn't stay on, and the administrators had to go to Congress hat in hand for more money to keep the program alive. It was fourth down and everything was riding on the first test when, after a long and frustrating series of delays, Columbia finally roared off the pad and into the history books. This book is a must for those who want a viable space program. I can't recommend this book enough.

David Knisely

It seems to me to have been a very short year. One year ago this month I was still racking my brain with what to come up with for an acceptable program that wouldn't get me thrown out the observatory. I had no idea that the following month I would have to stand up in front of all of you and conduct an astronomy meeting, even though my experience in astronomy was somewhat limited. But I did stand up there and we did somehow get through the entire year without any major catastrophies. I even accomplished one or two of the goals I had hoped to accomplish...of course as it often goes, I didn't get done as much as I had hoped to (not even close), but I guess we did make it through the year.

I thought it would be wise here to let the voters of the club know that I do not plan on running for president this year. I thank you for having been nominated again, but because of my somewhat volatile work schedule and my classes at school I may not be able to attend all of the meetings next year. I still hope to remain very active in the club in as

many ways as I can, but feel it would be unfair to you for a president to miss meetings. I also think a change of thought and freshness is the best formula for a leading club position, and I think that both Lee and Bev can bring that fresh thought into the presidents office.

Thank you very much for the chance to get to know all of you a little bit better. I feel that I really have! See you at the meeting...

John Lortz

Star parties in November are on the 16th and 23rd. Start this month with M76, an interesting planetary nebula located almost a degree north and slightly west of psi Persei. Visible in a three or four inch telescope, this object looks a bit like a fuzzy dumbell and bears high magnification well. Also in Perseus is the 10th magnitude elliptical galaxy NGC 1023, located about one degree south of the star 12 Persei. It is roughly lens shaped and those of you with eight inch or larger instruments may see a faint patch of light on the east end that appears to be a satellite galaxy.

In cetus is a fairly large planetary nebula NGC 246, located about a degree south and directly between the two stars Psi 1 and Psi 2 Ceti forming a nice triangle with the nebula at its lower apex. The nebula appears as a faint circular patch of light with two or three stars in it when viewed with a six or eight inch telescope.

Down in Sculptor be sure to look at the bright spiral galaxy NGC 253, located four degrees north and two degrees west of alpha. Visible in binoculars, this elongated galaxy shows hints of detail in a six or eight telescope, with larger instruments showing much of the objects true form. About one and one half degrees to the southeast is the globular cluster NGC 288 which shows stars in an eight inch although it does not resolve to the core.

David Knisely

This months meeting will feature Scott McMaster and a presentation by him of the Space Camp he attended in Huntsville Alabama. Also Jack Dunn will present a video tape about Halley Comet. Andy Corkill

Curt Roelle a member in good standing who resides in Westminster MD. sent his newsletter of a newly formed club. The Westminster Astronomical Society 3481 Salem Bottom Rd. Westminster MD. 21157 phone 848-6384.

Curt has supplied us with many memorable letters and I would suggest we do the same. Upon his suggestion we will start exchanging newsletters with their club. Theirs will be at each one of our meetings for you to look at. Their club has an initial membership list of ten members and we all wish him the best of luck.

The telescope committee who is in charge of the construction of the new club scope will meet again this month to finalize preliminary plans to start planning the final phase of the preliminary work leading into the preliminary stage of finalizing the phase of the final plans. Ron Veys is the committee chairman and says the above makes perfect sense, according to his Vic 20 computer and its Master Time and Project Management Program.

The September meeting also included the nominations for next years club officers. Nominations are open until voting time at the October meeting. The new officers are then installed at the November meeting and the old officers are shot. The following nominations were, eh, nominated...

President-- L.Lee Thomas, John Lortz (incumbent), and Bev Hetzel.

Vice President-- Ron Veys (incumbent) and Andy Corkill.

Secretary-- Bev Hetzel (incumbent) and Russ Genzmer.

Treasurer-- L.Lee Thomas (incumbent), Ron Veys and Norma Coufal. Seems like a lot of people want to handle our money!

Program Chairman-- Andy Corkill (incumbent), Bryan Schaaf.

Please be sure and attend the October meeting and nominate and vote for your clubs new direction and future. If you cannot attend try to contact the officers with your voting intentions.

The following is a portion of a letter received from Rick Johnson. Rick is one of our more active members who takes off each summer for Park Rapids MN.

"We have been having some great heat inversions lately spurring all sorts of UFO reports. Most are capella and Aldebaran turning all colors of the rainbow. Last night I watched as Capella split into three pieces several times while skimming the northern horizon (it is circumpolar up here).

I suspect that really will make believers out of these people. Early Sunday morning a deputy sheriff went off the road chasing Aldebaran. He ripped out a line of mailboxes before going into the ditch. According to today's paper he claims a green ray beam from the UFO shoved him off the road! Heat inversions can be so much fun!!

Rick has since reported to this reporter that his lights have been flickering on and off. Also the one side of his face is sunburned red but he doesn't remember how it got that way. I'd check out back to see if any WWII airplanes have suddenly appeared out of nowhere....

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