

In looking over past PAC newsletters, an interesting perspective can be gained. Activity is a major basis for any club and the PAC can be proud that it has not lacked for this quality over the past years. There is, however, one consistent pattern which emerges from the club notes that perhaps characterizes the PAC. We are a very strong public service group. From Astronomy Day at Gateway to staffing and operating Hyde Observatory, we provide Lincoln with an invaluable service that no one else in the area can provide. Our service record is a true 'feather' in PAC's hat.

However, perhaps along the way to where we now stand we have neglected to some degree a basic principle that is fundamental to the health of any club, i.e. providing services to it's members. Lately, as a club we have been somewhat stale-mated. We have poor attendance at monthly star parties (I raise my hand as one of those who never shows up!), and very few members even considering working on an observing program toward the Messier Award or the Herschel Award. It seems to be the right time for the PAC to try something different, to attempt re-kindling the fire in its membership.

If you read newsletters from other clubs around the country you'll notice that a large number of them are constructing club-owned observatories. You see everything from simple cement slabs to full blown roll-top domes. But the common denominator is that these clubs have done something for their membership. They have created a place for members to use their telescopes outside of the city, and a place for members to freely come and use club telescopes. The end product is renewed life and interest in the club.

I think the time has come for the PAC to begin steps toward creating its own observatory, a major project which will not just happen over night, and will take a big effort on the part of ALL the members of the club. A simple outline of what's involved might look something like this:

PAC OBSERVATORY PROJECT

1. Guiding Committee organization
 - a. sub-committee's
 - b. project time-line development
 - c. allocation of member resources
 2. Fact Finding Trips
 - a. trips to area club observatories
 - b. letters in inquiry to other clubs
 3. Basic Planning
 - a. location
 - distance from city
 - rent or own land
 - easy access for members
 4. Construction
 - a. members talents
 - b. work times
 - c. quality control
- b. type
 - simple cement slabs
 - housing for PAC scope
 - roll top observ.
 - c. materials
 - what can members provide
 - costs
 - fund raising

Even a simple outline such as this shows the magnitude of our task. But with the proper guidelines and member involvement, I think it's something we can and should do. And if we pull it off, that would be a REAL feather in our hat!!!

The following two letters were sent to the editor from Bryan Schaaf. Bryan has some great information and some excellent ideas that he passes along to us...

A ROLL-OFF ROOF OBSERVATORY IN MYETTA, KANSAS

In 1979 an astronomy club was founded in Topeka, KN. The original members [including Bryan himself...-Ed.] named the club "North East Kansas Amateur Astronomers League"; abbreviated N.K.A.A.L. . The new organization gradually grew to the current 45 members it has today.

Three years ago, a few of the club members constructed a 14 x 22 rectangular roll-off roof observatory that now houses an assortment of telescopes that range in size from 8 inches to the largest telescope of 17.5 inches of aperture.

The observatory is constructed of a concrete slab foundation (\$300), a lumber 'A' framed roof and walls (\$500), including wooden runners and lawn mower wheels for the roof roll-off motion.

Such an observatory could be constructed for less than \$1000.

HELP WANTED: To clean and refurbish the 12 1/2 inch telescope currently sheltered near Hickman at Earl Mosers'. Furthermore, help is wanted to build a brand new shelter for the telescope.

I propose that volunteers join together to clean and refurbish the telescope and build a shelter for future use by club members, i.e. a true "CLUB TELESCOPE".

The proposed task would provide a unified club project as well as a common goal to attain a club base for individual and group observing sessions.

Perhaps the shelter could be a roll-off roof observatory to accommodate more than one club telescope and observational supplies such as charts.

Please send any comments concerning the above to Bryan Schaaf, 726 G St. Apt #7, Lincoln, NE. 68508. [you may also send comments to John Lortz, or any club officer]

STAR PARTY WITH THE OMAHA CLUB...

Next month the PAC will be having a joint star party with the Omaha Astronomical Society at their observing site. The party will be on Saturday, October 12th and will begin about sundown. Specifics on what will take place and how to get to the site will be available at the club meeting this tuesday. Let's have a good turn out!!!

The Prairie Astronomer is published monthly by the Prairie Astronomy Club and is free to all club members. Membership expiration date is always listed in the right corner of the newsletter mailing label. Address all membership renewals to: PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB, INC., P.O. BOX 80553, LINCOLN, NE 68501.

For further club membership information or suggestions contact one of the following: John Lortz (Pres.) 572-1451 (Omaha), Ron Veys (V.Pres) 464-1449, Bev Hetzel (Sec.) 435-7881, Lee Thomas (Tres.) 483-5639, or Andy Corkill (Prgm. Chair.) 488-1096. All articles for the newsletter should be sent to newsletter editor, JOHN LORTZ 3119 MAPLEWOOD BLVD. #41, OMAHA, NE 68134, no later than 10 days before each club meeting date.



BY DAVID KNISELY

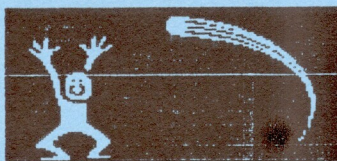
Star party date for this month is Saturday October 12th (we're having a joint party with the Omaha club at their observing site). Many observers new to amateur Astronomy are disappointed with their first view of M31, the Great Andromeda Galaxy, located just north-west of Nu. Many ask me what this object looks like through various telescopes and my answer goes something like "Things don't get much better until the telescope is as big as you are." To a certain extent that's true, but the novice can get a better view by using a very low power/wide field eyepiece. Large binoculars reveal hints of the hazy spiral structure, but at least an eight inch is required to show the main dark lane on the north edge of the nuclear region and faint indications of the star cloud in the south-west part of the galaxy. A ten inch shows some of the star clouds and hints of the north-east spiral arm as well as the dark lanes and a few of the globular clusters in M31 (they look like faint stars). All these details are rather vague and take a good sky in order to be easily seen.

The only other galaxy in the northern sky that shows details comparable to M31 is nearby M33 in Triangulum. Visible easily in binoculars, this object all but vanishes in most 2.4 inch refractors due to their long focal lengths and subsequent higher powers. In an eight inch the nucleus and the patchy hints of the two main spiral arms are visible, as well as the gaseous nebula NGC605. A ten inch brings out many faint patchy details as well as the overall spiral form and a 12 1/2 inch shows it much as many pictures do only fainter.

Many of you are probably saying "Sure, he can find it, BUT WHAT ABOUT ME???" Well, the key to finding M33 is to look three degrees west and one degree north of alpha for something large and faint. I have seen it in a 2.4 inch so you certainly can.

There is a third bright galaxy visible in the fall sky; NGC 253, located seven and one-half degrees south and one degree east of Beta Ceti. It shows up as a small narrow streak of light in binoculars and a four inch shows the large vague nuclear region. An eight inch will reveal some very vague mottling across the galaxy, and a 10 inch with Lumicon's Deep Sky filter shows

definite light and dark detail in the haze that surrounds the nucleus. And please, don't give up on galaxies! They are difficult to observe but they are still fascinating and challenging !!!



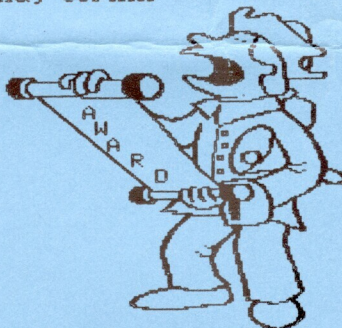
This month's program will be presented by our hard working observing chairman, David Knisely (haven't I seen that name somewhere else in this newsletter?).

Dave will be speaking about his trip to the Midstates Convention in Kansas, including some slides of all the important things he saw. Don't miss it!

Andy Corkill

Messier Award Pins were presented at the last PAC meeting. Those present who received pins were:

Earl Moser
Ron Ueys
Don Baker
Dave Knisely
Andy Corkill
Lee Thomas



To explain what the Messier Award Pins are, the Midstates Region has adopted a new procedure of awarding pins to those members who have completed the confirmed observation of either all the Messier Objects, or at least 75 of the objects. The pins were designed by George Allen of the Omaha club, and bear a symbolic "M" which Messier himself drew at the front of his observing notes.

Silver pins are awarded when 75 objects are reached, and then when all 110 Messier Objects have been recorded, the silver pin is traded in for the gold pin.

The PAC purchases these pins and they are awarded without charge. Anyone who has the Messier Award and has not yet received a pin should contact John Lortz. Everyone else... GET BUSY!!!



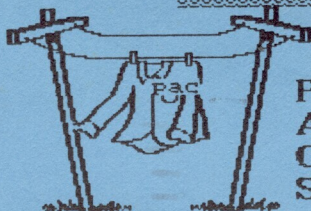
by David Knisely

Book Review

ATLAS OF DEEP SKY SPLENDORS
4th Edition
Hans Vehrenberg

When the subject of good observing books comes up, I invariably hear the complaint that these books don't show the object's picture with the right field orientation or scale. Well, the Atlas of Deep-Sky Splendors isn't one of those. It is a great publication for placing on coffee tables and is a must to have in your library. It contains over 400 selected deep-sky objects from all over the sky including all of the Messier Objects as well as a number of treasures from the southern sky. The pictures include one or two photographs from major observatories on one page and a wide field photograph of the object with the field orientation and the right ascension and declination marked at the margins on the following page. A short description of the object is also

presented with the pictures providing background information. Positions are provided for both epoch 1950.0 and 2000.0 as well as photographic magnitudes, sizes, number of stars (for clusters), and type of object. Most of the pictures are in black and white, but for a few of the famous objects, color photographs are also present. The wide field pictures and a few of the others were taken by Vehrenberg with his own equipment and the quality here is very good. He seems to realize that many faint objects show up better using black and white film, a fact that was evidently not understood by the creators of the newer books like the Cambridge deep-sky Album. The price (\$39) is a bit steep, but I feel for the size and quality of this book, it's worth it!!!



Prairie Astronomy Club Shirts....

For those of you not at the last meeting, the club decided to get new PAC shirts with a new logo. Because the shirts had to be ordered, they won't be ready until next month. You can still order shirts by contacting John Lortz. PRICE: \$10.49 + tax (These are quality Pennys shirts)

THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMER
c/o Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc.
P.O. Box 80553
Lincoln, Nebraska 68501



FIRST CLASS MAIL



EARL MOSER
HICKMAN NE 68372
86/09 R