



Should We Change Our Name?

BY LEE THOMAS

For nearly 25 years, we've called ourselves the Prairie Astronomy Club. (Twenty five years? Maybe we ought to have a great big birthday party! We deserve it!)

Our official corporate name is Prairie Astronomy Club of Lincoln, Inc.

The name has served us well through the years. However when we began investigating the purchase of property, a couple of things became apparent when we talked to total strangers:

1. The "Club" in our name tended to make us sound awfully social, and not very serious. It didn't exactly conjure up visions of orgies and Bacchanalian romps (a la "Singles' Club"), but, to some people, it made us sound like we were kind of an exclusive clique out to have a good time, and maybe there would be beer cans on the lawn afterwards. (Astronomy? What do you guys do, get together and predict the future by examining the entrails of chickens on the night of the full moon?) In other words, "Club" didn't quite convey the right impression.

2. The "Of Lincoln" made us sound like we excluded everybody outside the city limits, which, of course, we don't. We tolerate people from Omaha, Beatrice, and all those strange outlying places, no matter how bizarre their behavior.

At the last meeting, the issue of a possible name change was raised, and tabled for further discussion. Such a change would, of course, require some paperwork with the state and the IRS, but it shouldn't cost anything but time.

Many of our Astronomical League brethren, e.g. Omaha, Kansas City, St. Louis, Denver, use the name "Society". Examination of a list of League members, in fact, reveals that "Society" is the single most popular name. Next most popular is "Association", as in "Athens Astronomical Association". Some organizations simply call themselves "Astronomers", as in "Orange County Astronomers". Less than 10% of the organizations refer to themselves as "Clubs". The name "Observers" crops up once in awhile, as in "Kansas Astronomical Observers". And then, there are a few that get really creative, as with "Skyscrapers, Inc.", "Idyll Gazers", and "Western Observatorium".

I doubt that we would ever want to give up the "Prairie" name, because it is uniquely ours, and without the "Of Lincoln" attached at the end, it gives us geographic scope. So, perhaps we are looking at becoming the "Prairie Astronomy Association (PAA)", or the "Prairie Astronomy Society (PAS)". Or we could get carried away and call ourselves the "Prairie Sky Observers", or the "Astronomical Association of the Prairies (AAP)". Or, we can ignore the possible misconceptions arising from our name, and leave well enough alone.

We are at the discussion stage. With the club elections at hand, it seems appropriate to talk a bit about what we want to be, and what we want other people to think we are. Come to the meeting ready to vote on officers, and armed with your opinion about our name.

THE REVIEWER

by David Knisely

Build Your Own Telescope

by Richard Berry

I have wondered when Richard Berry, editor of Astronomy Magazine, would get around to writing a book. Well, he finally got to it with Build Your Own Telescope, and I can say that the results of his labors are a mix of the good and the mediocre. This book is intended to serve as an introduction to telescopes and a source for complete plans for five fairly simple home built telescopes. It does a pretty good job on the planning and construction end, but it has some problems with the way the technical information is presented.

The book is divided into 12 chapters. The first three deal with the basic description of how telescopes work, how they are mounted, and how to select the design that is best for you. It is here that Berry makes a few mistakes in the organization of the work. In chapter two, he gets way too technical in his description of the mathematics of telescopes, going into all the gory detail on things that I had to learn in my senior year optics course in college. He details the math behind the two element achromatic refractor, something even most advanced amateurs don't deal with right away. He doesn't do all that bad a job doing this, but I ask you: Is it really necessary? The beginner will probably give up in despair when he hits the Abbe-V numbers! Berry should have gone with a simple written description of how refractors work and stayed away from Snell's Law and the like. At least he should have left this subject for much later in the book.

Chapter three deals with mountings and, for the most part, does an excellent job of describing the various mounts with all the advantages and disadvantages listed. He also mentions the Poncet table for making a Dobsonian track equatorially, but he should have included a diagram of it since it is

almost impossible to visualize one (I had to see one in person before I understood how it worked). This chapter almost makes up for the problems in chapter two!

The next five chapters give you excellent step-by-step instructions on the construction of telescopes using commercial optics. Berry details construction of a 4.25 inch Newtonian, a 6 inch f/8 Dobsonian, a 6 inch f/8 equatorial Newtonian, a 10 inch Dobsonian, and a 6 inch f/15 Refractor. My only real problem with these chapters is inclusion of the six inch refractor: the objective lens can cost as much as all the other telescopes put together!

Chapter nine is a good discussion of cells, spiders, focusers, finders, and eyepieces. Berry gets a bit too picky when it comes to the advantages of certain eyepieces over others, but does a fairly good job of describing them. He then launches into mirror grinding, doing a fast job on a subject that has had entire books written on it. Here again, Berry stumbles, placing star testing of telescope mirrors ahead of the normal Foucault shadow testing which has been the mainstay of amateur and professional mirror makers. He does get around to the Foucault test but he does not give a good enough diagram for making a knife-edge tester. He also stays with the shadow mask technique rather than the easier to use Everest, or "pin stick" method.

The last chapters contain a good discussion on using your telescope. There are a few glaring errors here. His small lunar map misidentifies three craters, but other than that, this section is fairly good. It is followed by an extensive series of three appendices that list sources for parts and information on telescopes.

For the most part, this book is a nice addition to any amateur astronomer's library. I hope that Richard Berry does some reorganization and a little pruning of this work for the next addition though, because it still could be a better book.

The Prairie Astronomer is published monthly by The Prairie Astronomy Club Inc., and is free to all club members. Membership expiration date is listed on the mailing label. Membership dues are: Junior Members and Newsletter Only Subscribers... \$8.00/yr, Regular Members... \$22.00/yr, Family Membership... \$25.00/yr. Address all membership renewals or questions to THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB, INC., P.O. BOX 80553, LINCOLN, NE. 68501. For other club information contact one of the following officers: Andy Cortill (Pres.) 488-1096, Norma Coufal (V. Pres.) 483-5685, John Lortz (Sec.) 390-9821 (Omaha), Lee Thomas (Treas.) 483-5639, Dan Neville (Prog. Ch.) 476-7772. All articles and comments should be sent to newsletter editor JOHN LORTZ 9255 CADY AVE. #14, OMAHA, NE. 68134 no later than 6 days before monthly club meetings.

THE NEXT STAR PARTIES ARE ON NOVEMBER 28TH AND DECEMBER 26TH AT EARL MOSER'S HOUSE NEAR HICKMAN. High in the northern sky late in the evening is one of the brightest galaxies in the sky, NGC 2403 in Camelopardalis. Located about one degree west of the fifth magnitude star 51 Camelopardalis, the galaxy can be seen in 10x50 binoculars as a small fuzzy oval, with larger instruments showing the oval nucleus of this spiral. An eight or ten inch will show two dark spots in the outer haze, as well as hints of the spiral structure. There are also a few fairly bright stars in the area with a few being superimposed on the face of the galaxy, so don't confuse these with the true faint details.

The wealth of open clusters in the winter sky continues with NGC 2281 being a prime target for viewing with telescopes larger than four inches. It is located less than a degree south-west of Psi-7 Aurigae and is large and irregular. Its bright stars form a sort of "Stick-Man" formation that is worth a second look.

Gemini offers a number of interesting objects for viewing. One nice but infrequently observed open cluster is NGC 2266, located about two degrees north of Epsilon Geminorum. It is a small rich "U" shaped group of faint stars that should show up well in a six or eight inch. You get two for the price of one with the double planetary nebula NGC 2371-2, located two degrees north and a degree east of Rho Geminorum. An eight inch shows them as two fuzzy ovals with some faint haze between them. A somewhat easier planetary is the so-called "Eskimo" nebula, NGC 2392, located about a degree south and two east of Delta Geminorum. It appears as a fairly bright central star surrounded by a fairly bright bluish disk and a faint outer ring when a six or eight inch telescope is used. The "Eskimo" form is not very evident unless at least a 12.5 inch instrument is used with the Lumicon UHC filter, and even then you have to use your imagination a lot!

Probably the best open cluster for the small telescope is good old M-35, located about two degrees north and 1.5 west of Eta Geminorum. Visible to the unaided eye, the cluster shows more than 100 stars with some strings of stars being visible in a four inch. If you look carefully with a 4.25 inch telescope at an area just to the south-west of M-35, you may see a small faint fuzzy patch of light. This is NGC 2158, a rich but very distant open cluster that takes at least an eight inch to even partially resolve. Hints of stars can be seen

OBSERVING CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by David Knisely

in a six inch, but even my ten shows only about 25 along with the glow of many unresolved ones.

Aside from the Great Orion Nebula, most people would probably say that Orion doesn't have too much else to offer the amateur astronomer. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Orion offers some spectacular open clusters for the patient viewer. NGC 2169, less than a degree south-west of Xi, is a small but very beautiful group of bright stars arrayed in two triangles that make the group look like a prism. A fainter but no less interesting cluster is NGC 2194, located about 1.5 degrees south and 1/2 degree east of Xi. It is moderate to small in size but very rich with rather faint stars. My eight inch showed two long chains or rays of stars leading out from the cluster. This object is a real challenge for a six inch aperture.

As a final challenge for those of you with ten inch and larger instruments, try the tiny nebula CED-62, located about one degree south and one degree east of 64 Orionis. It is less than two minutes of arc in size and consists of two very very faint patches of light on either side of a 13th magnitude star. This is one of the so-called "bipolar nebulae", and has been proposed as the site for a possible solar system in the making. The protoplanetary disk of dust and gas seen almost edge-on to us blocks the light from the star and divides the leftover nebula in two. I first ran across this object when I saw its picture on a photograph used as a finder chart for Halley's comet last year. At the time, I was having difficulty seeing the comet at magnitude +14, but I could see CED-62 fairly easily with averted vision in my ten inch. Well, at least Halley's comet helped me find something new, even if it didn't do much else for me otherwise!

At The Next Meeting....

It's club election time again (boy, doesn't time fly by?) and at the November meeting you'll have your chance to contribute to the future of the club for 1987! So far, the following PAC members have been nominated for club office...

PRES : Lee Thomas
VP : Norma Coufal, Dave Knisely
TREAS : Lee Thomas, Ron Veys, Norma Coufal
SEC : John Lortz, Bev Hetzel
PRG.CH : Dan Nevile, Ron Debus, Jack Dunn

If your name is not on this list and you'd like it to be, it's not too late! Nominations for office won't officially close until just before the ballots are cast this tuesday night. If you have no friends in the club who will nominate you, go ahead and nominate yourself! All the big Washington boys do

it, so you can too. Even if your not interested in a club office, be sure to attend the meeting so you can use your club-given right **AND VOTE!!!**

According to President Corkill, there will also be a vote on the following changes to be made in the by-laws...

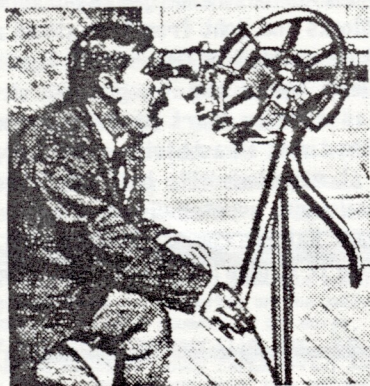
1. Vote on whether to drop the "of Lincoln" from the club title of "The Prairie Astronomy Club of Lincoln".
2. Vote on changing the title of the office of "Program Chairman" to "Second Vice-President".

DEEP SKY & TELESCOPE MAKING SUBSCRIBERS NEED TO RENEW!
If you wish to renew, start new subscriptions, or transfer existing individual subscriptions to the club plan for Deep Sky or Telescope Making magazines, you need to bring your money to the November meeting. We must have a minimum of 5 subscribers for each publication to participate in the plan. Your rate is \$7 for four issues of each magazine. (Non-club rates are \$12). If you can't make it to the meeting, please drop your money in the mail to Lee Thomas right away.

THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMER
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Next Meeting November 25th
PAC Elections will be held!!!