

Be sure to carry your card with you--it's your identification, especially at Atlas Site when you are confronted with armed Gage County Sheriff's officers, or our own Security Team (the ones carrying the AK47's and accompanied by vicious German Shepherds. You'll recognize them by their uniforms bearing the universally-feared "Pinwheel Galaxy" insignia.)

ON ATLAS SITE SECURITY... A new lock and gargantuan chain will soon be installed at Atlas Site. All previously-issued keys will be worthless, so anybody who hasn't renewed will be confronted by a really daunting Impenetrable Barrier. (Those attending the last meeting saw the chain Del Motycka obtained. It would be great for gang warfare--if a gang member could lift it!)

The new lock cannot be opened with universally-available keys. They're special (expensive) models that can only be duplicated by a select few locksmiths, and no locksmith will make a duplicate unless our unique tab is presented to them. Each key will be numbered, and must be returned when a member leaves the club or does not renew his/her site privileges. (Please, folks, these keys ARE expensive--they're not the 75-cent K-Mart specials. Our total tab for security this time is well over \$100. If keys are lost or not returned, there will be a \$5 replacement charge.)

Another little wrinkle--you cannot remove your key unless the hasp has been reinserted into the padlock, i.e., you cannot leave it hanging unlocked. For your own protection, as well as that of the site, you are encouraged to rechain the lock behind you when you enter. This will prevent strangers from disturbing your skygazing. Don't just leave it attached to one end of the chain, even if you're expecting more club members later. We've had a few instances of uninvited "vistors" following in behind members, apparently expecting all-night partying of a variety different than astronomers enjoy.

We have discussed "getting serious" about site security. This is just one step we need to take. Some members have plans to eventually build observatories or other permanent structures at the site, but unless we establish our Territorial Imperative across the next few years, that won't be possible. I wish it was as easy as making our turf like the coyotes do it. (Without a privy, we've already been doing that, but it's obvious it doesn't have much effect in warning off others of our species. Another example of how "civilization" has mucked things up.)

New keys will be issued to those whose fees are paid up at the next meeting, along with your membership card. If you can't attend the meeting, please call me to arrange getting your key to you--we will NOT send them through the mail.

THE *Prairie Astronomer*

Astronomy Day 1990

by Dave Knisely and Jack Dunn

THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB will celebrate ASTRONOMY DAY on SATURDAY, MAY 5th in the lobby of Mueller Planetarium on the UNL city campus (yes folks, its that time of year again!). Setup will start at about 8:00 am, with the exhibit being officially open to the public sometime after 9:30 am. Tear down should be around 4:30 pm. At present, all shifts are available, and we need everything you have!! If you have tables, you may want to bring them, along with something to sit on (it's going to be a very long day). We don't care how small or homemade your telescope is, bring it anyway!! You may want to make a sign for it describing what its aperture is and who owns it. We have plenty of room this year, so if you have any pictures, models, or other interesting stuff, bring it (we have to get something to top the artificial comet we had one year). Space material is especially needed as we would like to put it all in a nice display showing the club's interest in space exploration. We also need computers, especially those with astronomical programs or games. Posters, signs, picture albums, books, magazines, and atlases would also be nice to have on display. If you have multi-outlet extension cords, please bring them (especially if you have any three prong adapters). And, most importantly, bring yourself! I have learned over the years that those people who take up our hobby have first talked at length with at least one amateur astronomer. It is that personal contact that gets people in and keeps them interested. Sign up sheets should be available at both the March and April meetings. If you can't make it to the meetings but still want to help, contact Jack Dunn at the Planetarium. Jack will be running at least one planetarium show and possibly a Laser show during the day, plus we are planning some advance publicity through the media. This should make up for last year's problems and should insure us good crowds. Let's make this year's display the best ever!

The Prairie Astronomer

c/o The Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc.

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Next Meeting March 27, 1990

President's Message

by Ron Debus

For the past few months Doc Manthy has donated a solar filter (as seen in Sky and Telescope) and \$1.00 as door prizes. The only catch is you must remain after the club meeting and program (usually 9:30). When we draw for the solar filter we draw names until someone claims it. However when we draw for the dollar we draw only once and if the dollar is not claimed it goes back in the kitty and another is added for the next meeting. Such is the case for the March meeting. The dollar prize is now up to two dollars. Stick around this gets better. Now on the back of the Eisenhower dollar and the Susan B. Anthony dollar they show the Eagle landing on the moon. Also on a different year of Eisenhower dollar is a big moon behind the Liberty Bell, I've asked Doc to spice up the dollar prize with these coins and he agreed. This would be a good idea as it relates the prize to astronomy. Last months solar filter winner was Evan Littrell.

The last few months we have had a lot of our younger members and guests present. I hope this keeps up, it's a good sign for our club's future. I hope to see all of you at the next meeting. Lets have a good turn out--Remember, this months meeting has two Lunar coins to be giving away. Thanks for listening!!

Some Notes From Lee...

MEMBERSHIP CARDS will be distributed at the next regular meeting of the club. We have added a few little embellishments to the cards to provide you with additional information, and make them a bit more 'official'.

First, each card carries a number with a "F" (family) or "R" (regular member) prefix. Family members are entitled to two cards (just let me know what name the second card should have on it).

Atlas key holders also have their key number and the expiration date just below the card number. (This will, hopefully, remind keyholders when they should ante up their renewal money.)

Be sure to sign your card when you get it. You'll get a new card at the next meeting after you renew your membership. Try to attend that meeting so we don't have to spend postage mailing out cards. (A reminder: newsletter-only subscribers are technically not members, so they don't get cards.)

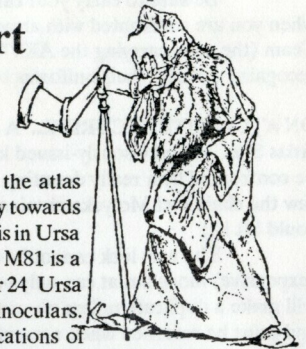
We will probably go to a different color of card each year of issuance--so, for example, all cards issued after 12/31/90 will be pink (or fuchsia, or mauve, or some other exotic color other than this year's "prairie goldenrod").

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The Prairie Astronomer is published monthly by the Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc., and is free to all club members. Membership status and expiration date are listed on the mailing label. Membership dues are: Junior Members and Newsletter Only Subscribers...\$10/yr; Regular Members...\$24/yr; Family Memberships...\$27/yr; Address all new memberships, 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: Ron Debus (Pres)435-5688, Dave Knisely (V.Pres)223-3968, Kim Ellen Owen (Sec)423-7440, Lee Thomas(Tres)483-5639, Jack Dunn (2nd V. Pres)475-3013. All newsletter comments and articles should be sent to Newsletter Editor JOHN LORTZ, 12023 Parker Plz. #105, Omaha, NE 68154 no later than 7 days before monthly club meetings.

Observing Chairman's Report

by Dave Knisely



The next scheduled star parties are on April 20th, and 27th at the atlas observing site. Early spring skies open the window out of our galaxy towards deepspace and into the realm of the galaxies. A good starting place is in Ursa Major, where we find the bright pair of galaxies, M81 and M82. M81 is a tilted spiral located two degrees east and 3/4 south of the faint star 24 Ursa Majoris, and can be glimpsed as a tiny fuzzy spot in a pair of binoculars. Eight or ten inch apertures sometimes begin to show faint indications of spiral structure, although the details are difficult at best. Most people observing for detail look much to close to the nuclear region. The actual spiral arms are a long way out and are quite narrow, with the southern arm showing the most detail. Less than a degree north of M81 is the peculiar galaxy M82. Small telescopes show M82 as a cigar shaped patch of light with a possible dark spot near the center. Large instruments begin to show extensive dark structure especially at high power. Another interesting but fainter galaxy in Ursa Major is located about one and a half degrees north and a bit west of 67 Ursa Majoris, namely NGC 4051. Visible in moderate sized apertures, this galaxy shows as a faint elongated fuzzy patch with a tiny faint nucleus and hazy north-east to south-west fans of light. A ten inch will show signs of patchy structure in the outer haze.

A nice bright galaxy for small instruments in NGC 2903, located one and a half degrees south of Lambda Leonis. This object shows a prominent nuclear region in a moderate sized oval area of haze when viewed in small to moderate sized telescopes. An eight inch will show some mottling in the outer haze. A ten inch under good conditions shows extensive mottling over the entire galaxy, with bar-like patches appearing near the middle, along with hints of the overall spiral structure. A nice trio of galaxies can be found in the hind leg of Leo about halfway between the stars Theta and Iota, namely M65, M66, and NGC 3628. Both M65 and M66 are visible in 10x50 binoculars, but show little structure unless observed with at least six inches of aperture. M66 looks asymmetrical in a six, while eight shows hints of an arc-like spiral arm on the west side of the galaxy. A ten inch shows additional dark detail and vaguely shows both main spiral arms. M65 appears roughly cigar shaped with a small brighter center. A ten inch hints at a dark lane running along the east side. NGC 3628 lies to the well to the north of M66 and is a challenge for a four inch. It is a nearly edge-on spiral that shows a hint of a dark lane in an eight inch. A ten will show the dark lane along most of the galaxy and will make the ends of the galaxy seem diffuse.

In eastern Corvus lies the interacting galaxy NGC 4038-9, located 1.3 degrees south and 3.4 degrees west of Gamma Corvi. A six inch will show it as a faint diffuse oval of light with a slight protrusion on one side, with an eight making the protrusion into a noticeable hook on the south end. A ten inch shows a hint of a large patchy ring in the main galaxy plus the hook and hints of other faint detail.

As a final target, look for the faint but interesting galaxy NGC 4274, located 1.5 degrees north and 1.5 west of Gamma Comae Berenices. An eight inch aperture will show it as a moderate sized rather elongated fuzzy patch with a brighter nuclear region and faint fans of light off each end. On a good night, a 10 inch will show hints of the eastern arm and a number of other galaxies in the area.

Editor's New Address:

I have a new address and phone. Please send all newsletter material to:

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