The Prairie Astronomer

June 1994 Volume 35 Issue 6

The Nebraska Star Party

by Dave Scherping

It looks like everything is in order for the 1st Annual Nebraska Star Party, which will be held at Merritt Reservoir, July 7-10. Get ready for DARK skies!

TEE SHIRTS...

At the May meeting, we presented three designs for tee-shirts. The club voted on the designs and the winner was a design by Brian Schaaf. After the meeting, due to popular demand, it was decided that we would also place an order for the second most popular design. The orders have now been placed. The color will be royal blue with black printing.

Orders may be picked up at the June meeting or at the star party (see Dave Scherping). Make checks payable to Prairie Atronomy Club. The cost of the tee-shirts is $8.50 each. This is more than the $5.90 quoted at the meeting because the original estimate was for a white shirt and we failed to include setup and screen costs.

If we were unable to contact you and you wish to purchase a tee-shirt, a few extras were ordered and will be available at the star party and at the July meeting (Extras will not be sold at the June meeting except to NSP attendees).

PROGRAMS...

Due to lack of participation, there will not be any presentations given at the star party. Perhaps next year. Since we won't need to rent the meeting tent, we will apply the allocated money toward door prizes.

DOOR PRIZES...

I've had a great response to the letters I sent requesting door prizes for the star party. We've also received some from members and, during an executive committee meeting, the club officers voted to have the club donate two door prizes. To date, door prizes include:

"The Sky" for Windows
donated by Bisque Software
"A View Of The Universe" by D. Malin
donated by Sky Publishing
3 subscriptions to "Clear Skies"
donated by Sky Bear Publishing
$35 gift certificate & NGT18 Video
donated by JMI
Free coating on a 20" or smaller mirror
donated by QSP
7.4 mm Plossl Eyepiece
donated by Tele-Vue
1 pair of electric socks
donated by Tom Miller
Tele-Vue eyepiece case
donated by Tom Miller

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welcome!!!

Terry Volkman
1835 Lake Street
Lincoln, NE 68502

Ben Rush
8519 Horizon Drive
Lincoln, NE 68505

Please note a correction from last month's listing of new members. Randall Ludl should have been:

Randall Volk
226 D Street
Lincoln, NE 68502

inside...

From the Program Chairman

by Dave Scherping

LAST MONTH...

The highlight the May meeting was the annual "Name That Object" contest, featuring slides of observatories, telescopes, the Solar System, and deep sky objects. I was impressed with the knowledge the participants exhibited. I also showed slides from my visit to the Riverside Telescope Making Conference, which was held over Memorial Day weekend near Big Bear Lake, CA. Eric Hubl finished out the program with an excellent slide show of the activities at Hyde Observatory during the May 10th solar eclipse. As usual, if you missed the meeting, you may borrow the video tape from Tom Miller.

THIS MONTH....

The program at the June meeting will be given by Dave Knisley. Dave is going to give us a demonstration of the highlights of Dance Of The Planets, one of the premier astronomical computer programs. Come and be awed by the latest in computerized astronomy. *[see Dave's article elsewhere in the newsletter, Ed.]*

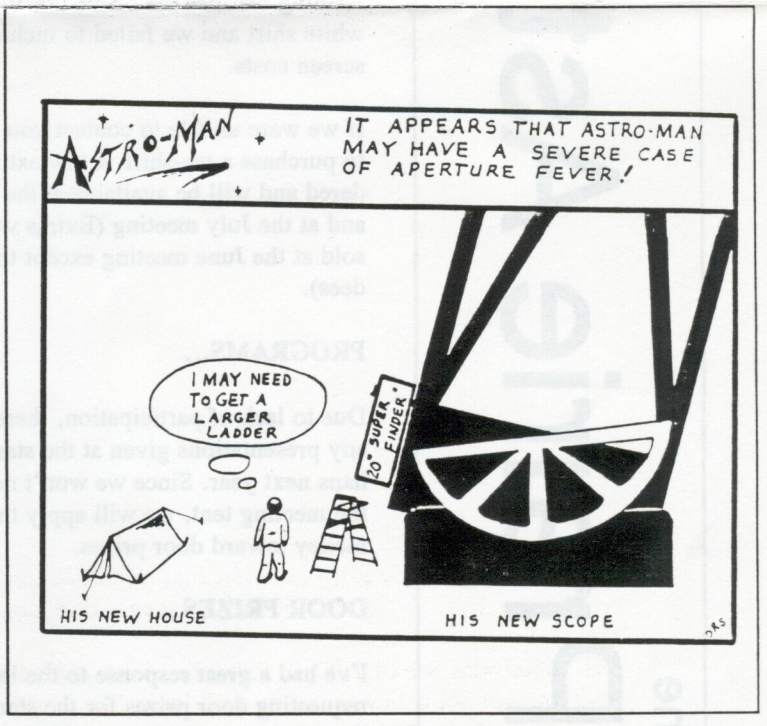
DOOR PRIZES....

In May, we gave away several copies of "Clear Skies", a new quarterly publication dedicated to observing. I met the editor at RTMC and she gave me several copies for door prizes. A week earlier, we received three free subscriptions to be given away at the Nebraska Star Party.

We also gave away a couple of books and some blank computer disks at the may meeting . This is the last of the door prizes that were donated by several of our generous members. Does the club want to contribute?

June 28th Meeting Program Announcement

The June meeting's program will be a demonstration by **Dave Knisely** of the newest version of the powerful computer program, **Dance of the Planets**, Version 2.71 QED. Dave is a beta tester for the program, and knows both the history and the details behind Dance. He will highlight the many features of this unique piece of software, which not only allows realistic views of solar system objects and events, but accurately simulates the location and movement of all the planets and their moons, nearly 6000 asteroids, and over 1400 cometary apparitions. Included in the demo will be the **simulation of the Comet Shemaker-Levy 9 impacts on Jupiter.** Since most of the demonstration will be on the small computer screen, some of you may want to bring a pair of low power binoculars which can focus at short range, so you may see all the detail on the monitor. We hope to have a TV camera relay to the monitors in the observatory, but considering the number of members who have been attending lately, you may want to get a seat early **See you at the meeting!**



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: Regular Members...$10/yr; Family Memberships...$12/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: John Bruce (Lincoln) 483-0389, Lee Thomas (Lincoln) 483-5639, John Lortz (Omaha) 496-1122. All newsletter comments and articles should be sent to Newsletter Editor JOHN LORTZ, 11684 MEREDITH AVE., OMAHA, NE 68164 no later than 10 days before monthly club meetings. Club meetings are held the last Tuesday of each month at Hyde Observatory in Lincoln, NE.

While You Were Gone...

by Jason Stahl

The time for the First Nebraska Star Party is only nine days away, and closing rapidly. We all are eagerly awaiting these days of clear skies at night, and warm days with little or no humidity.

There is still time for those last minute decisions on attending this spectacular event. Don't miss the best skies in the Northern U.S., and it is only six and a half hours away.

As Dave has mentioned in his article, I have the toughest job than any other participant. I am the official coordinator for the Clear Skies Task Force. I have searched for four long months for the elite few who are competent enough in providing the best weather conditions for our Nebraska Star Party. For the last month, this group has spent the entire time preparing for this "Impossible Mission .

As for the T-Shirts, those who ordered one or more, should bring the appropriate money to collect your order.

Reminders for July

- Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 hits Jupiter on the night of the 16th, and ends on the 22nd. The brightest fragment, (Q), strikes Jupiter on the 20th.
- The First Nebraska Star Party at Merritt Resort is the seventh-tenth.
- The Delta Aquirids Meteor Shower will peak on the night of the 28th. The average hourly rate is around 20/hr.
- The next scheduled star parties will be held at the Atlas site on the eighth, and the 15th. The cloudy/rain dates are the ninth, and the 16th.
- The moon Phases:
  New Moon: Eighth, First Quarter: 15th, Full Moon: 22nd, Last Quarter: 30th.
- The 28th through the 30th is the A.L. Convention in Kansas City, Kansas.
- The next P.A.C. Meeting is on the 26th at Hyde Observatory starting at 7:30p.m.

Observing Chairman's Report

This month is compiled of some moderate to deep sky objects that are focused on the dark skies we will have at Merritt Reservoir. Some of these objects can only be seen under the dark skies at Merritt with small to medium sized telescopes, and will not be suitable for observation from Eastern Nebraska.

- ✓ We start with NGC 5970, SerCp, Sc Ga, 15h 38.5, 12.11deg., 12.2mag., size 3.0x2.1'. This Ga has a small but bright core with little or no arms easily seen.
- ✓ NGC 6027= Seyfert Sextet, SerCp, Sp Ga group, 15h 59.2, 20.45deg., 13.4mag., size 2.2x1.2'. You should be able to see three or four Ga very close to one another under dark skies.
- ✓ IC 4593=PK 25+40.1, Her, PN, 16h 12.2, 12.04deg., 10.9mag, size >12" This is a small Planetary that is somewhat difficult to find, but we have many more where that came from.
- ✓ NGC 6106, Her, Sb+Ga, 16h 18.8, 7.25deg., 12.8mag., size 2.6x1.5'. It has a small diffuse starlike core.
- ✓ NGC 6181, Her, Sc Ga, 16h 32.3, 19.50deg., 12.5mag., size 2.6x1.3'. Bright core with some spiral structure clearly visible.
- ✓ NGC 6210=PK 43+37.1, Her, PN, 16h 44.5, 23.49deg., 9.3mag., size >14". Bright PN for the size. Easy to find and observe.
- ✓ NGC 6229, Her, GC, 16h 47.0, 47.32deg., 9.4mag., size 4.5'.
- ✓ NGC 6239, Her, Sb Ga, 16h 50.1, 42.44deg., 12.8mag., size 2.8x1.3'. Small elongated spiral that is fairly faint for an eight inch scope or smaller.
- ✓ NGC 6309=PK 9+14.1, Oph, PN, 17h 14.1, -12.55deg., 10.8mag., size >14", "Peculiar" nebula. Once you see this PN, you will not believe your eyes. It looks like there is three PN next to each another.
- ✓ NGC 6356, Oph, GC, 17h 23.6, -17.49, 8.4mag., size 7.2', extremely Faint stars, and a lot of them.
- ✓ NGC 6482, Her, E3p Ga, 17h 51.8, 23.04deg., 12.2mag., size 2.3x2.0'. The core has a very close star.
- ✓ NGC 6535, SerCd, GC, 18h 03.8, -0.18deg., 10.6mag., size 3.6'. This GC has very few stars compared to other Globular Clusters.
- ✓ NGC 6539, SerCd, GC, 18h 04.8,-7.35deg., 6.9mag., size 9.6'. Several bright stars in core that form a straight line.

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- ✓ NGC 6572=PK 34+11.1, Sgr, PN, 18h 12.1, 6.51deg., 9.0mag., size 15x12". Easily seen in any telescope under good conditions.
- ✓ Finally, NGC 6709, Aql, OC, 18h 51.5, 10.21deg., 6.7mag., size 13'. Large OC of about 40 stars. Maybe hard to find due to the large size.

Good Luck, and Happy Observing. See you at the June Meeting.

13.1" CLUB SCOPE

by: Dave Scherping

At the last meeting, we discussed the 13.1" club scope and several members volunteered to participate in designing and building it.

To date, the following components have been donated for the project:

13.1" primary mirror	donated by Tom Miller
2.6" secondary mirror	donated by Tom Miller
2" / 1-1/4" Tectron focuser	donated by Doug Bell
Truss tubes	donated by Tom Miller
Teflon	donated by Dave Scherping

The intent of the project is to build a portable Dobsonian scope that will be available for use by any club member. Obviously, there are still many components and materials to purchase. At the June meeting, the team will present estimated costs and we will vote on club funding of the project.

Halley's Comet of 1910 Revisted (pt. 2)

by Rick Johnson

After we passed though the head of Halley's Comet and nothing happened there was no article in the paper saying why nothing was seen. But short filler pieces chiding astronomers were in nearly every paper (it was a weekly back then) after this for several months. Those I found are shown below. I don't know if they are of local origin or not. Fillers also appeared before it appeared in the sky. Note the change in them after nothing happened. I've included a few involving Mars and its newly discovered "canals."

October 14, 1909
Since water is so scarce on Mars, Perhaps they will fill the canals with Kerosene. The next feat is now to discover a means of communication with the men of Mars.

November 4, 1909
How does it feel to be sprinkled with star dust? Halley's comet uses that kind of celestial Confetti. By its conduct, Halley's comet is causing a lot of Gossip.

December 2, 1909
Halley's comet is nothing if not punctual. It is in fact four months ahead of time.

Mars being 15,000,000 miles away (sic) its poles are discovered with ease by rocking chair explorers. (Please explain this one to me.)

Scientists who insist there is no life on Mars have no respect for the feelings of some popular Novelists.

The Halley's Comet now is as brilliant as stars of the 13th magnitude. But that, we are informed by a casual observer is not so blamed brilliant.

December 30, 1909
Mars must have started a deep water ways movement thousands of years ago.

With your 5 or 6 inch object glass you may easily see Mr. Halley's comet now. (To easily see a 13th magnitude comet with a 5" telescope, they must have had far darker skies than now!)

January 13, 1910
Kansas Astronomers have now located Halley's comet. It may as well come in and surrender.

January 20, 1910
Halley's comet is getting nearer. It is not yet known whether its coming portends war in Europe, Central America or Congress. Maybe it will bunch its belligerent hits.

January 27, 1910
Sufficient funds have been raised by Public Subscription for the establishment of an Astronomical observatory at Kamuke Honolulu, especially to observe Halley's Comet.

February 10, 1910
If Halley's Comet must strike the Earth somewhere, we hope it will have sense of discrimination and land in Nicaragua. (There was a revolution going on down there at this time.)

February 17, 1910
Mr. Halley's comet will have to move a little closer or it will be outshone. Mr. Halley's widely known comet still refuses to appear fora nything so common as an opera glass.

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(Continued from page 4)
Scientists are wondering what causes the yellow veil over Mars. Maybe Mars has shriek journalism. (or a dust storm!)

March 10, 1910
All well-regulated comets have tails to burn.

March 17, 1910
The new comet has 50,000,000 miles of tail. This is all gas. If you catch a comet you can dispose of your meter.

Traces of sodium have been discovered in that tramp comet. Evidently we must take our comets with a gain of salt.

March 24, 1910
Friends of the comet cannot successfully demonstrate that it is having a warming effect on the earth.

Mars may be in a high state of civilization but a world that depends upon canal boats for transportation can't be very up-to-date.

March 31, 1910
Mars, according to an astronomical expert, has just finished a new canal. It is a pity we cannot establish that communication with the martians so as to engage a few gangs and a choice lot of engineers to hurry up the Panama job.

April 7, 1910
The tail of Halley's comet is expected to cover the world in a gaseous envelope. There is no known method by which the meters can be made to register the extra supply.

April 14, 1910
As the comet is too far away to register a denial, why not blame it for all the freak weather this spring.

May 19, 1910 (The day after the predictions proved false. Is this related? I don't know.)
An oak tree in Minneapolis committed suicide. No one will blame it.

May 26, 1910
The eclipse of the moon, Haley's comet (sic) and the senior class play were all star attractions this Monday (May 23, 1910) evening.
And the latter eclipsed the others as an entertainment feature.

The eclipse of the moon Monday evening was as interesting spectacle, as the sky was perfectly clear. Halley's comet was also doing its most brilliant stint off in the west, but as an attraction it is far from what the astronomers have promised the public.

June 16, 1910
A group of scientists can prove anything.

June 23, 1910
Some of our astronomers could write a large and uninteresting book on what they don't know about comets.

Who says that the life of an astronomer is not replete with excitement? Halley's comet returns every seventy-five years.

July 7, 1910
Pretty soon astronomers will be at liberty to get back to the problem of signaling Mars.

July 14, 1910
Every astronomer can have his own theory as to what happened to the comet's tail.

Princeton university may get $30,000,000 from a recent will. That ought to buy a lot of astronomy.

August 11, 1910
Since the comet has departed people have to charge up to sunspots whatever they cannot understand.

November 3, 1910
According to astronomers there is an unusual amount of moisture on Mars just now. Canning time perspiration, no doubt.

That's all I've found so far. Though I'd sure like to know what that Liais guy was drinking in Rio. It seems to be rather potent stuff.

(Continued from page 1)

Observing Log for Messier Objects
donated by Dave Scherping
CCD Atlas
donated by PAC
Deluxe Sky Atlas 2000
donated by PAC

Also, along with the gift certificate, QSP is offering a 5% discount on mirror coating to all members of the Prairie Astronomy Club!

BE SURE TO SIGN UP FOR DOOR PRIZE DRAWINGS (before 7:00pm Saturday). A sign-up sheet will be located at the observing area. Please write each attending family member's name on a separate line, as each is eligible to win.

SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT...

Jason Stahl has volunteered to be the official NSP Clear Skies Coordinator. If by small chance clouds are encountered, please see Jason immediately so he can promply remedy the situation!

DAY ACTIVITIES...

There's plenty to do at Merritt during the daytime hours, including:

Fishing - Inquire at Merritt Trading Post

Boat Rentals - Inquire at Merritt Trading Post

Pontoon:	$110/day	$35/hour
16ft boat w/ motor	$65/day	$15/hour
14 ft boat w/o motor	$25/day	$5/hour

Canoeing/Tubing - Bob Leavitt has agreed to organize a canoe trip on the Niabrara for Friday. Tentative time is 10:00 am - 2:00 pm. Cost is approximately $25/canoe & $10/tube. Contact Bob at 488-5335 if you are interested. *Bob needs to know headcount for reservations, so contact him ASAP.*

Swimming - Merritt Resort or state park.

Solar Observing - At the observing site.

Dining - Smith Falls Canyon Restaurant - 3 miles N of Merritt Trading Post.

Snake River Falls - 3 miles N of Merritt Trading Post (behind Restaurant)

Fort Falls - 14 miles NE of Valentine

Smith Falls - Somewhere up near Valentine.

Hiking

NSP AGENDA...

Thursday July 7:

	Check-in, set-up camp, etc.
Sunset	OBSERVING

Friday July 8:

10am-2pm	Canoeing/tubing on the Niabrara (contact Bob Leavitt ASAP if interested)
6:00 pm	BBQ (location to be announced at NSP)
Sunset	OBSERVING

Saturday July 9

7:00 pm	Door Prizes (at the Observing Area) 1,000,000 B.C. Award Gasseous Nebula Award
Sunset	OBSERVING

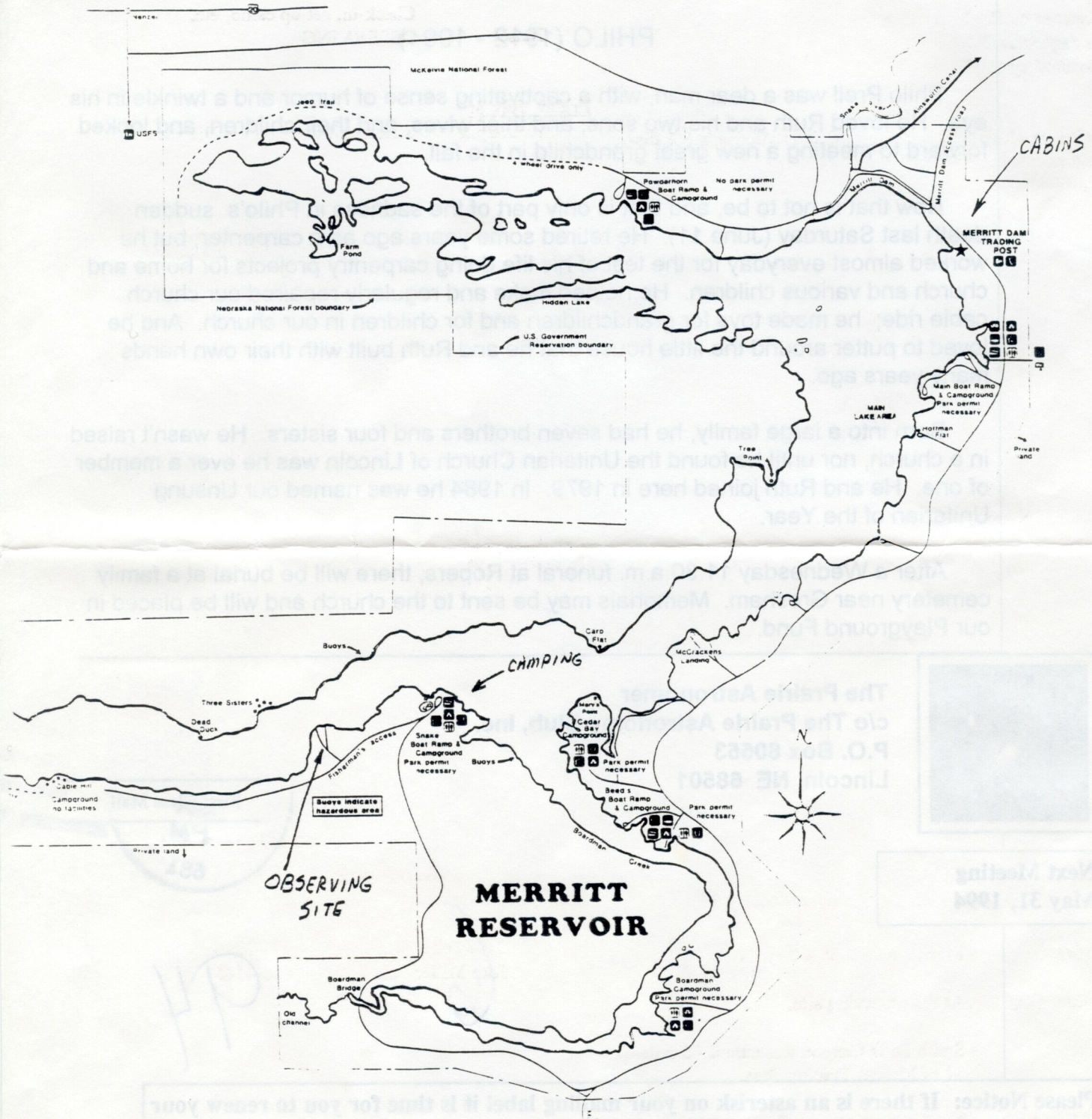
Sunday July 10 Depart in Awe

A map of the Merritt Reservoir area is enclosed. The observing area is located on the south side of the lake and is within walking distance of the Snake Campground. Suggested camping area is Snake Campground or observing site. Obtain part permit at the Merritt Resort.

Late arrivals (after dark) are requested to park at the Snake Campground and walk to the observing area. If necessary, another member can then guide you to the observing area with your parking lights on.

If anyone needs directions or any other information pertaining to NSP, contact:

Dave Scherping	477-2596
Tom Miller	466-4145


McKelvie National Forest
Jeep trail
USFS
4 wheel drive only
Powerhorn Boat Ramp & Campground
No park permit necessary
Farm Pond
Nebraska National Forest boundary
Hidden Lake
U.S. Government Reservation boundary
Snake River
Kinkaid's Camp
Merritt Dam Access road
Merritt Dam
CABINS
MERRITT DAM TRADING POST
Main Boat Ramp & Campground
Park permit necessary
MAIN LAKE AREA
Hartman Flat
Private land
Tree Point
Caro Flat
McCrackens Landing
Buoys
CAMPING
Three Sisters
Dead Duck
Snake Boat Ramp & Campground
Park permit necessary
Fisherman's Access
Buoys
Mary's Point
Cedar Bay Campground
Park permit necessary
Reed's Boat Ramp & Campground
Park permit necessary
Cable Hill Campground no facilities
Buoys indicate hazardous area
Private land
OBSERVING SITE
Boardman Creek
MERRITT RESERVOIR
Boardman Bridge
Old channel
Boardman Campground
Park permit necessary
N

The Passing of a Good Friend...

The following obituary was sent to me by Russ Alberts and was written by Charles Stephen for The Lincoln Unitarian newsletter.

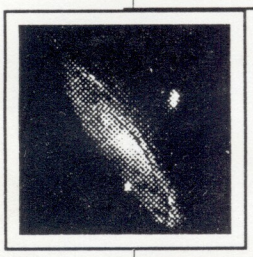
PHILO (1912 - 1994)

Philo Prell was a dear man, with a captivating sense of humor and a twinkle in his eye. He loved Ruth and his two sons, and thier wives, and their children, and looked forward to meeting a new great grandchild in the fall.

Now that is not to be, and that is only part of the sadness in Philo's sudden death last Saturday (June 11). He retired some years ago as a carpenter, but he worked almost everyday for the test of his life doing carpentry projects for home and church and various children. He helped make and regularly repaired our church cable ride; he made toys for grandchildren and for children in our church. And he loved to putter around the little house that he and Ruth built with their own hands many years ago.

Born into a large family, he had seven brothers and four sisters. He wasn't raised in a church, nor until he found the Unitarian Church of Lincoln was he ever a member of one. He and Ruth joined here in 1979. In 1984 he was named our Unsung Unitarian of the Year.

After a Wednesday 11:30 a.m. funeral at Ropers, there will be burial at a family cemetery near Gresham. Memorials may be sent to the church and will be placed in our Playground Fund.



The Prairie Astronomer
c/o The Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc.
P.O. Box 80553
Lincoln, NE 68501

Next Meeting
May 31, 1994

94027 09/95 FS 08
Mr. Earl Moser
P. O. Box #162
Hickman NE 68372

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Please Notice: If there is an asterisk on your mailing label it is time for you to renew your PAC membership!

inside...