

President's Report

by Dave Scherping



The Prairie Astronomer

CONGRATULATIONS RUSS

It's great to see amateur astronomers devoting time and effort to accomplishing goals, such as obtaining the Messier Award. I'm pleased to announce that **Russ Alberts** has completed the requirements for the Honorary Messier Award, and will be awarded a pin and certificate. To receive this award, the astronomer must locate, observe and record all 110 Messier Objects, which obviously requires a great deal of commitment. Congratulations Russ.

I encourage PAC members to pursue the awards offered by the Astronomical League, including the Messier Award, Herschel Award, and Binocular Messier Award. If you would like more information, please call me at 477-2596 or contact the coordinator listed in The Reflector.

NEBRASKA STAR PARTY

The coordinators of the 2nd Annual Nebraska Star Party have been meeting on a regular basis. In early November, Tom Miller, Del Motycka, and John Bruce made a trip to Merritt Reservoir and Valentine to finalize the details. They met with several motel owners in Valentine and have managed to reserve 125 motel rooms for the week of the star party. They also located a meeting hall in Valentine where we can conduct programs. These will be held on Friday July 28th, and will be followed by a banquet, which will be catered by the owner of the meeting hall.

The coordinators have also finalized the NSP brochure and mailed them out to clubs in many surrounding states (approximately 3000 brochures). A copy of the brochure is enclosed with this newsletter. Notices have also been submitted to S&T and Astronomy

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Shipments are In

If you ordered any of the following items, they should be available at the December club meeting:

- Ottewell 1995 Calendar
- Exploring the Universe Calendar
- RASC Handbook
- Starry Messenger Calendar

If you have paid for any of these items, they will be held for you. If you ordered but did not pay, the item must be picked up and paid for at the December meeting, otherwise it will be sold to someone else. A few extra copies of each item were ordered, and these will be sold on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Nebraska Star Party Press Release

The second annual Nebraska Star Party will be held from July 25 to July 30 near Valentine, Nebraska.

The Prairie Astronomy Club of Lincoln, Nebraska, is being joined by the Omaha Astronomical Society in sponsoring a dark sky party in North Central Nebraska. This star party was created in 1994 to give area amateurs a reachable star party with world class dark skies. The location was chosen to take advantage of the very low population density and dry air of the Nebraska Sandhills. The Sandhills region has a long-standing reputation for unspoiled beauty, and a new reputation for exceptionally dark skies. Over 70 people enjoyed the inaugural Nebraska Star Party in 1994.

(A copy of the official brochure has been included as a newsletter insert)

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Observing Chairman's Report

by Douglas Bell

Next star party:	December 30 (Friday)
New Moon:	January 1 (How symmetric!)
Lunar object of the month:	Schroter's Valley & Aristarchus
Planet of the month:	Mars
Messier monthly:	M1, The Crab
Top 40:	Pleides
Challenge:	Cassini's Division

Observing tip:

Try standing on a carpet scrap. That concrete gets awfully cold and a little insulation goes a long way.

"How high is the sky?"

Dana Bell, age 3

"Huh?"

Doug Bell, age 35

As you may have guessed, Dave Scherping has lost his mind and asked me to be Observing Chairman. Obviously one of his less lucid moments. Impeachment proceedings can be conducted as noted in the "official" club bylaws.

I hope you like the new format. I'm experimenting. Whether there is something for everyone, or nothing for anyone remains to be seen. In any case we'll try it and wait for your feedback. Hopefully it'll coax more observing out of more people. I've slanted it more to beginners but have tried to leave something which even our experienced observers will find challenging. Also, this month has more bright objects because January observing tends to be from a light polluted backyard. The lunar phase and star party information is right in front where it's easy to find. The tip and quotes are just for fun. There will also be a short description of each object. Please let me know what you think of the format and pass on any good tips, objects, quotes, and/or reports. It doesn't need to be fancy or impressive. If you liked it other people probably will too.

Lunar feature of the month: Schroter's Valley & Aristarchus.

A wonderfully complex system of rimae (valleys), bumps, craters, and rays on the western side of the moon. Best viewed about two days before full. This area is home to many "Lunar Transient Phenomena" (LTPs) reports. Very rare and unexplained events consisting of sudden brightening and/or reddening of the area. Aristarchus is a very (for the moon) new crater with fresh crisp features and bright rays. It's easy to believe that if the Moon still has volcanoes that this would be the place.

Planet of the month: Mars.

Well what do you expect? With Mars at it's bi-yearly opposition you need to look now or forget it (until 1996). Besides, it's the only object besides the Earth and the Moon where you can actually see features on it's solid surface.

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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: 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,

Top 10: The Pleides (M45).

One of my all time favorites. Try a wide field eyepiece. Try binoculars. Try your naked eye. We usually think of six naked eye Pleides, but try again at a dark site with good conditions. Are there seven, eight, ten? The nebulosity is faintly visible an 8" SCT.

Messier Monthly: M1, The Crab Nebula

Messier's first, and the only supernova remnant on the list. This is one of the harder messiers being a dim peanut shaped glow. This is also one of the newest deep sky objects being less than 1,000 years old. Think of how fast it's expanding for it to cover such a large area in that time. By the way, are there any naked eye supernova remnants? The answer next month.

Challenge: Cassini's Division.

Get real Doug, that's easy!

Yes, but have you tried lately? Saturn is setting and it's rings are getting narrower and narrower. By Spring they will be gone (it drove Galileo nuts). Besides, who ever needs an excuse to look at Saturn?

At the November Meeting.....

by Bryan Schaaf

President Dave Scherping reported at the meeting that the club telescope is done...almost. The c-clamps that hold the secondary mirror assembly is all that remains to be done. By now you can expect that it is done, and Dave will probably bring it to the next meeting for everyone to see.

Doc Manthey provided Dave with old PAC newsletters dating back to 1975 and it was noted that there were PAC history presentations (two, I think) in years past. The idea to have a updated PAC history presentation was brought up at the meeting. It is assumed that one or more of the early members will help in this project, but you need not be a long-time member to take part. Volunteers anyone?

There was also some discussion to have new name tags for members made since many newer members don't have name tags and some that do, tend to forget to bring them to the meetings. The suggestion was made that name tags could be kept in a box at the observatory, so that they could be distributed at the beginning of each monthly meeting. It would be nice to have name tags worn at the meetings so that members and guests could readily identify one another. Anyone that would like to make name tags or help make them are encouraged to contact Dave Scherping and let him know.

2nd Annual Nebraska Star Party brochures were handed out at the meeting. The brochures have been mailed out by now to various astronomy clubs and individuals in Nebraska and surrounding states to announce the July 25th-30th, 1995 event. If you have any questions about it or want to contribute to the planning of it, please consider attending the next NSP organizational meeting on January 12th, at 7:00 pm or contact Dave Scherping or Tom Miller. NSP meetings are held at Miller Seed Company, 1600 Cornhusker Highway. A lot remains to be

done and your help would be appreciated.

Erik Hubl announced that the hard work of many PAC members over the past two years have paid off. The effort to educate the public about light pollution and what to do about it has resulted with the city's acceptance of construction guidelines. They help to regulate lighting of new business and store sites.

Dave Knisely provided the door prize- a book entitled "The Moment of Creation". George Hubl won the door prize.

Mahoney Star Party dates for 1995 will appear soon in this newsletter and will resume in April. The Mahoney State Park Star Parties have been a great success and lots of fun. As more people become aware of them in 1995 it is expected that far more people will attend. We'll need more volunteers and more telescopes.

Lee Thomas has the prices of the following:

Ottewell's Astronomical Calendar 1995.....\$16.95 or \$ 9.85 ea.
for an order of at least ten

RASC Handbook\$15.89 or \$10.50 ea.
for a minimum order

Starry Messenger Desk Booklet Calendar...\$ 8.95 or \$ 7.85 ea.
for an order of at least ten

Wonders of the Universe Calendar.....\$ 10.95 or \$ 5.75 ea.
for a minimum order

Exploring the Universe Calendar.....\$ 10.95 or \$ 5.48 ea.
for a minimum order

Lee stated that our annual order is a month over due already, so if anyone wants to order any of these items they best get their order and money to him right away.

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magazines. We have developed a list of prominent potential speakers and some have been contacted. We will have a better idea as to the program schedule in the next few months. If anyone knows an individual or organization that might be interested in the star party, please contact Dave Scherping (477-2596) or Tom Miller (466-4145) and we'll send them a brochure.

John Bruce is in charge of this year's NSP tee-shirts. The NSP coordinators will select this year's design from submitted entries. If you wish to submit a design, get it to John by 1-12-95. You may use up to 4 colors.

Additional NSP information is given in the brochure. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at 477-2596 or Tom Miller at 466-4170. If you plan on attending, be sure to register as early as possible. I appreciate the many individuals who have devoted time and effort to ensuring this year's NSP will be a huge success.

The next NSP planning meeting will be held on January 12, 1995 at 7:00 pm at Miller Grass Seed Co., 1600 Cornhusker Hwy. If you want to get involved, show up at this meeting... there's still alot to do.

ALCON

Did you notice how many of our club members were on the cover of the last issue of The Reflector? Those were the one's who attended ALCON '94. We made a great showing, with 11 members in attendance, and 2 members giving presentations. Quoting the Reflector article, "Ron Veys, from the Prairie Astronomy Club in Lincoln, NE, gave a very informative presentation regarding how the local club worked with the City of Lincoln to help fight light pollution in that city. Eric Hubl, from the same club, gave a unique presentation regarding the Medicine Wheel: Astronomical Calendar of the Past". Also, as Ron Veys pointed out at the November PAC meeting, everyone must have thought we put on a great MIDCON '93, since they had many of the same speakers at ALCON '94.

NAMETAGS

I mentioned at the November PAC meeting that we need to update our nametags. After the meeting, Ben Rush and Jim Atkins volunteered to undertake the project of getting them made. Thanks Ben and Jim.

CLUB TELESCOPE

It's finally done. The 13.1" club scope has been completed and may be seen at this month's meeting. This project turned out to be alot bigger than originally anticipated, and I appreciate all of the assistance I got. Special thanks go out to the following people for making this project a suc-

cess:

Tom Miller donated optics, Telrad, & truss tubes and helped with construction.
 Doug Bell donated a Tectron focuser.
 Ron Veys built the spider and helped with other construction.
 John Bruce did alot of special machining, donated knobs, & helped with construction.
 Jason Stahl helped with construction.
 Kevin Dowd helped with construction.
 Eric Hubl helped with construction.
 Randy Volk helped with construction.
 Bruce Mitchell helped with construction.

ATLAS SITE

The owner of the adjacent land continues to slowly construct the first of his 14 houses. At the rate he's going, it will take him a while to complete. PLEASE NOTE: For some reason, he has opened one of the hatches on his land directly west of our pad, exposing a dangerous 15 foot deep cavern. There is a truck tire placed over the opening, but it still has an opening large enough for a child to fall through. If you take children to the site, do not allow them to wander west of the paved observing area.

A couple of months ago, vandals destroyed the door to our outhouse. If anyone has a spare door or wants to build one, it would be greatly appreciated. Also, John Bruce has agreed to act as Site Manager until someone else volunteers.

ALTERNATIVE OBSERVING SITE

Last summer, I was planning on doing some fishing with a friend. Before long, our fishing trip had turned into a 3-family picnic, and we met at a small park near Beaver Crossing. We didn't catch any fish, but I did discover a fantastic new observing site. There's a little sky glow to the east from Lincoln and a little in the west from York, but the only directly seen artificial light is a TV tower several miles away. I've since spent six nights observing there, and it's proven to be a great site. On Friday December 2nd, we had 10 people show up and had a great little star party. There are no signs posted so you'll need to follow these directions to get there:

Go west on I-80 to exit 369 (Beaver Crossing). Go south about 1-1/2 miles where you will then turn west (there are some grain bins on the NE corner of the intersection). Go about 2 miles west and turn right (this is the 2nd road to the right and tees at the road you're heading west on). Go about 1/2 mile and the park's on the right hand side.

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*(Continued from page 4)***CLUB HISTORY**

Doc Manthey recently donated past issues of The Prairie Astronomer (1975-1986) to the club library. As I was reading through them, I came across a club history that Earl Moser put together in 1976. I thought it would be good to update the club history and keep a copy in the club library. It would be great to include photographs. If you have some photos you'd like to donate, or if you'd like to work on compiling the history, please let me know.

FROM THE PAST....

The following quotes were taken from past issues of "The Prairie Astronomer":

"Look for good hi resolution graphics in your computer. 200-300 x 200-300 dot screen is a good average display. Make sure it has color also, preferably 8 to 16 colors" - Russ Genzmer Oct '82

"It comes in 3 basic sizes, 16K, 32K, and 48K, but now you can expand your Apple all the way up to 128K of memory..... basic price is around \$1360 for a 16K tape based system but look to spend around \$1500 to \$2300 for a typical system." - Russ Genzmer Dec '82

Boy have times changed !

"NAME A STAR ???"

I got in my car the other day to venture from work to UNL. My radio was tuned to KLIN and "Coffee Talk Of Lincoln" was on. A man called in to ask if these companies selling "star names" were legitimate. These companies allow you to give them \$45 for which they will "officially" name a star after you or your loved one and send you a certificate. Bonnie Coffee (sp?) replied that she wasn't sure but she thought they were legitimate. I had to decide right then whether to be late for class and set the world straight, or ignore my responsibility as an amateur astronomer. After 2.3 milliseconds of deep thought, I slammed on the brakes, swerving to avoid parked cars, pedestrians, gas pumps, etc., and quickly found my way to the nearest pay phone. Amazingly, I got through on the first try and was soon on the air spreading the truth. After I explained that these people had nothing to do with the IAU or the rest of the astronomical community, she said, "so you as an astronomer would never hear about this star getting a new name". I replied, "No, there's only two people who know it by that name; the person who sold it and the person who bought it!" I think the man was glad he called in before throwing away 45 bucks on a scam that has fooled many. I felt pretty good too.

LOST: 200" f5 truss-tube type Dobsonian telescope with 20" Super-Finder. Easily identified by an irregular shaped

brown & white spot on the mirror. Last seen in the back of a Chevy Pick-up traveling north on 70th street toward the Village Inn, following the November PAC meeting. If found, please contact:
ASTRO-MAN
Apt. M-31
Andromeda Blvd.
Lincoln, NE 68531
1-900-ASTRMAN

At the NEXT Meeting...*by Dave Knisely***COLLIMATION**

The December club meeting will feature Doug Bell, with a presentation on the details of proper collimation, (it should be an "aligning" experience). Doug previously has given interesting talks on eyepieces and light pollution. This program should give you a good reason to brave the cold and join us at the meeting.

Tentatively, the January program will be a demonstration of the Mars Explorer CD-ROM software, and the February one will be on the history of Lowell Observatory, although this might change.

Speaking of programs, I AM LOOKING FOR ANYONE WHO MIGHT WANT TO DO EVEN A SHORT PRESENTATION AT ONE OF OUR MEETINGS. Perhaps you have taken a recent astronomy-related trip, or have some new equipment you would like to demonstrate. It isn't really very difficult to do a talk, and if you need help, I can usually provide it.

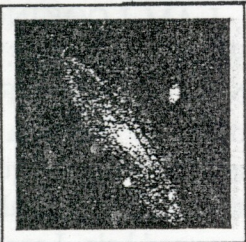
In any case, PLEASE let me know at the meeting, or contact me at home. You may also write me at 1616 North 14th Street, Beatrice, Nebr. 68310 (ph. (402)-223-3968 if you want to call and leave a message).

If I don't hear from anyone soon, I WILL start drafting people!

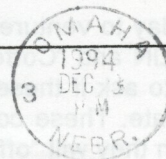
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By Dave Scherping**

**FINALLY, ASTROMAN DISCOVERED
WHY EVERYONE KEPT SAYING HE
HAD A SHITTY MIRROR !!**

For Sale: 18" f/5 reflector housed in a 10x20 ft. building on the OAS observing site. Telescope has a Galaxy primary mirror, a 4" 1/25 wave secondary, a heavy Poncet mount, and a 5" f/5 refractor finder. It won the Mechanical Excellence Award at a recent Texas Star Party. The building has a split roll-off roof, carpeting, paneled walls, astronomy pictures, a couch, and a stereo. Will take best offer over \$3000. Might consider selling items separately, but prefers to sell as a unit. Call Roger Besch at (402)486-1977.



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



**Next Meeting
December 27, 1994**

94027 9/95 FS 08
Mr. Earl Moser
P. O. Box #162
Hickman NE 68372

12-94

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

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