

The Prairie Astronomer

President's Report

by Dave Scherping

Thanks for re-electing me for another term as president of PAC. Also, thanks to the other officers for accepting their positions and the responsibilities that come with them. I hope this year will be even better than last year.

NSP...

We had our first official planning meeting for the 3rd annual Nebraska Star Party. It was held at Mahoney State Park at the Lodge restaurant. It turned out to be a little too noisy for having a meeting, so we will be renting a meeting room there for our next meeting. At the first meeting, we focused primarily on the registration brochure, which we hope to have ready for mailing in early December.

We also discussed having a photo contest of pictures taken at NSP. See page 4 for details.

Since Mark Dahmke now has a CD-ROM cutter, we plan to put together an NSP CD-ROM, including photos & video of the first three Nebraska Star Parties. The CD-ROM would be ordered at the star party and delivered a couple of months later.

I hope all of those who sign up to be volunteers can attend. If you would like to help out with NSP, there are still many areas needing volunteer support. Contact me at 477-2596 or show up at the meeting.

Proposed Mahoney Star Party dates:

These dates are not final, they are only selected dates and are meant to be discussed at the November meeting.

- Friday May 17: new moon
- Friday June 14: one day before new moon
- Friday July 19: four days after new moon
- Friday September 13: one day after new moon

If you have any suggestions or comments about the proposed dates, please contact either John Johnson of Omaha, or Jason Stahl of Lincoln.



NOVEMBER/DECEMBER MEETING NOTICES:

GENERAL MEETING
NOVEMBER 28th, 1995, 7:30 p.m.
at Hyde Memorial Observatory

NSP MEETING
THURS., NOVEMBER 30th
7:00-9:00 P.M.
at Mahoney State Park Lodge
Goldenrod Room

STAR PARTY
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22nd
at Beaver Crossing
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23rd
(Rain date)

GENERAL MEETING
DECEMBER 26th, 1995, 7:30 p.m.
at Hyde Memorial Observatory

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Observing Chairman's Report

by Douglas Bell

For December observing:

Next star party: December 22
 New Moon: December 22
 Lunar object: Ghosts of Ibn Battuta
 Planet: Jupiter
 Messier monthly: M 37
 Top 40: Hyades
 Deep sky: NGC 7789
 Challenge: NGC 1449

Quote of the month: "Its got dinosaurs in it!"

-Ryan Bell, age 2

Some cultures see a man in the Moon, some see rabbits, some see a bear, my two year old sees something new.

Tip of the month:

Pack up and go observing right after work. It's dark by 6:00 p.m. and you can be home before bedtime.

Lunar feature: Ghosts of Ibn Battuta

And you thought Halloween was over. These ghost craters were drowned when Mare Fecundatatis was formed. Look just south of crater Messier a few days after new moon.

Planet of the month: Jupiter

It's not what Jupiter's close to that counts, it's what's close to Jupiter. Galileo finishes its six year journey on December 7 when the atmospheric probe smashes into the planet. The probe will decelerate from 106,000 mph to 400 mph at over 230 g's. (And you thought "smash" was an exaggeration). All of the probe's information is expected to be recovered in spite of the main antenna failure.

Top 40: The Hyades

Aldebaran, the red eye of Taurus the Bull, highlights this V shaped naked eye cluster. Too bad that Aldebaran isn't a part of the cluster. Oh well. Aldebaran is always a sign to me that

Fall is turning to Winter and it's time to get out the long johns.

Messier Monthly: M 37

A nice open cluster in Auriga. This seems to be a good part of the sky for clusters. Auriga has three Messiers and Cassiopeia and the Double cluster are all nearby.

Deep Sky: NGC 7789

Speaking of open clusters. Check out this rich, faint cluster in Cassiopeia.

Astro trivia:

What color is the noon-day sky on Mars?

Last month's Astro trivia answer:

The winter stars seem brighter, because they are actually brighter. Vega, Altair and Deneb are magnitudes .03, .77, and 1.27, whereas Sirius, Rigel, and Procyon are -1.46, .12, and .38. Not to mention Castor & Pollux, Alderbaran, Capella, Betelgeuse, and the whole Orion complex.

Challenge: NGC 1449

The California nebula is easy to see.... in a photograph. This is a big, diffuse nebula which is probably a snap at Merritt. Unfortunately, it doesn't take much light pollution to wash it out. Larger aperture is of limited use due to the nebula's overall size. A wide angle view is a must.

Call for Presentations:

This is an open invitation for anyone interested in delivering a program at the monthly meetings. It's not nearly so hard as it looks and can be a lot of fun. I'm especially looking for anything which you have personally done, witnessed, recorded etcetera. Example topics might be mirror grinding, making or repairing a scope, observing programs, or road trips. If you thought it was interesting, then other people probably will too. Call Doug Bell at 489-8187 to schedule a date.

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...\$15/yr; Family Memberships...\$17/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, Jason Stahl (Lincoln) 423-4912, Bryan Schaaf (Lincoln) 438-4285. All newsletter comments and articles should be sent to: Bryan Schaaf, 1309 W. PLUM, LINCOLN, NE 68522 or E-mail to schaafb@aol.com (in plain text please) by the 15th of each month. Club meetings are held the last Tuesday of each month at Hyde Observatory in Lincoln, NE.

Treasurer's Report

by John Bruce

If you were not at the last meeting, you probably do not know that effective at the close of the last meeting dues have gone up.

First the rates: Individual membership was \$10.00 and is now \$15.00. Family membership was \$12.00 and is now \$17.00

Now for the reasons for the increase. John Lortz no longer has time to publish the newsletter for us. At first glance this does not seem to have any bearing on dues, *until* you consider that *HE HAS BEEN PAYING FOR PAPER, PRINTING, AND POSTAGE OUT OF HIS OWN POCKET* as a gift to the club for quite a few years (call John, mail him a note or send him e-mail at JLortz@aol.com thanking him for his dedication to the club).

His generosity kept our dues "artificially" low for a LONG time. Postage alone accounts for \$3.84 (12x \$.32) of the \$5.00 increase. This leaves only \$1.16 per year per member to pay for paper and printing (less than a dime per month).

Also the dues the club pays to the Astronomical League have gone up and there is serious discussion about another increase next year.

Even at \$15.00 our dues are among the lowest in the nation, as the average membership dues for a US club is nearly \$25.00. The lowest are \$10.00 (seems like a familiar number!).

One last thing for this month's marathon of a report. The membership list is going to be published (probably in January) and I will add e-mail addresses to the information listed. If you have one and want it listed please send it to me via e-mail at "jbruce@env.licor.com".

If you have Internet access, check out the club web page at the following URL "<http://infoanalytic.com/pac/>". You will be impressed. Others around the country have been and have sent e-mail expressing their thoughts.

A reminder from the last newsletter: it's that time of the year again to place orders for RASC Handbooks and other assorted yearly publications that can be yours at special discounted prices. Here is what we are offering this year:

1. RASC Observer's Handbook 1996

Published by Astronomical Society of Canada

List price \$16.95 (single piece)

PAC special cost \$11.00

2. Exploring the Universe Calendar 1996

This is a full color "wall" size calendar published by Kalmbach (Astronomy magazine)

List price \$10.95

PAC special price \$5.50 IF we sell 5 - 10 pcs

PAC special price \$5.00 IF we sell 11+ pcs

3. Astronomy and Space 1996 Weekly Calendar

Published by Starry Messenger Press

It is a spiral bound 6" X 9" "desk" calendar.

It is in the two page per week format - the left side being a full color picture and the right being the calendar.

PAC special price \$11.00 IF we sell 2 - 4 pcs

PAC special price \$10.00 IF we sell 5 - 9 pcs

PAC special price \$9.00 IF we sell 10+ pcs

4. Discover the Universe 1996 Calendar

Published by Tide-mark Press

This is a "wall" type calendar by Richard Berry (former editor of Astronomy Magazine).

List price \$10.99

The only way I will order these is if we sell 12 or more of them. Otherwise they cost the full retail.

PAC special price \$5.00 IF we sell 12 or more only

5. Otwell "Calendar" for 1996

This is the independently published "equivalent" to the RASC handbook. The price has gone up (wholesale and retail) due to the price of paper.

PAC special price \$13.00

We do not need to collect until we deliver the products, because we have enough \$\$\$ in the treasury to float this for a month or so, BUT IF YOU ORDER YOU ARE EXPECTED TO BUY (PAY). I will of course take advance payments if you want to do it that way, but if a price goes down because of quantity between the time you pay me and the time things arrive, think about making the difference a donation to the club. I will refund differences, but please recognize the time and effort that a \$.50 or \$1.00 refund takes. Just for your peace of mind, PAC will profit no more than \$0.15 per item on any of the above (just so no one thinks that the officers are planning a trip to the Winter Star Party).

I will be at the meeting to accept orders. If you can not get to the meeting you can call me to place your order. My home phone is 483-0389, my work phone is 467-0691 and my e-mail address is "jbruce@env.licor.com". The orders will be going in on December 2, so do not delay in getting your order to me.

See you at the meeting. John Bruce

MEETING ADJOURNED...

Secretary's Report

by Bryan Schaaf

The October 1995 PAC meeting actually took place on Wednesday, November 1st! The regular last-Tuesday meeting date would have been Halloween, so as a result November is a blue meeting month; two PAC meetings in the same calendar month. I've been told that PAC has had blue meeting months before, but it has been a long time ago since the last one.

The "What's Up" portion of the meeting consisted of a brief overview of meteor showers, comets (Hale-Bopp, De Vico, Bradfield), planets and moon phases.

Congratulations are in order for Kevin Dowd, Randy Volk, & Larry Hancock. Each recently won their Messier awards! None of them were present at the meeting, however. Probably they were out observing Herschel objects.

The light shielding for the Atlas Observing Site still has not been installed, but Erik Hubl will be checking on it.

Hah...the newsletter has new editors. Jason Stahl and I have volunteered.

Because of the increased dues for the Astronomical League and the cost of the club newsletter, there was the proposed increase in membership dues at the September meeting. At the meeting of November 1st, a motion was made and carried to have the membership dues raised five dollars (for details, see page 3).

The NSP volunteer list for Aug. 10-17th, 1996 was handed around again, and more people signed up. If you would like to volunteer for a NSP position, contact Dave Scherping by phone at 477-2596 or E-mail: "Astroman7@AOL.com".

The schedule for next year's Mahoney Star Parties will be set up by Jason Stahl and John Johnson. These public star parties have become very popular throughout the Spring and Summer months. As soon as the dates are announced, I will write them all down on my calendar.

Doc Manthey reminded everyone attending the meeting that there is always a need for more volunteers at the Hyde Memorial Observatory on Saturday nights. Sometimes there is only one telescope operator present for three telescopes and many visitors. If you would like to

The main event of the meeting was the election of 1996 club officers. Nominations were opened at the September meeting and remained open into the November 1st meeting. The 1996 officers are as follows:

President: Dave Scherping
 Vice President: Kelly Erlandson
 2nd Vice President (Program Chairman): Doug Bell
 Treasurer: John Bruce
 Secretary: Bryan Schaaf

The program after the meeting was the "Observing Log Database" developed and presented by Dave Scherping. His computer database allows you to record your observations and also includes a library of information on 14,000 deep-sky objects. It can also sort observations alphanumerically, chronologically, by object type, constellation, etc. The program runs in Microsoft Access 2.0. Copies may be obtained from Dave.

NSP PHOTO CONTEST !!!

If you attended this year's Nebraska Star Party, you are invited to send in your favorite photograph (and it need not be an astrophoto). All photos will be posted on our Web site. A panel of judges will choose the 3 best photos. The three winners will receive free registration to the 3rd annual Nebraska Star Party.

CONTEST RULES:

- Limit 1 photo per person.
- Photos can be submitted electronically or by mail.
- No slides (take it to the photoshop & get a print made)
- Prints will not be returned.
- Electronically submitted photos must be in JPEG or GIF format and not exceed 100 KB in size.
- Entry deadline: March 1, 1996.

The winners will be announced by May 1st.

⇒ E-mail photos & descriptions to:

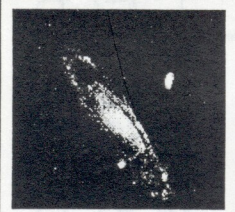
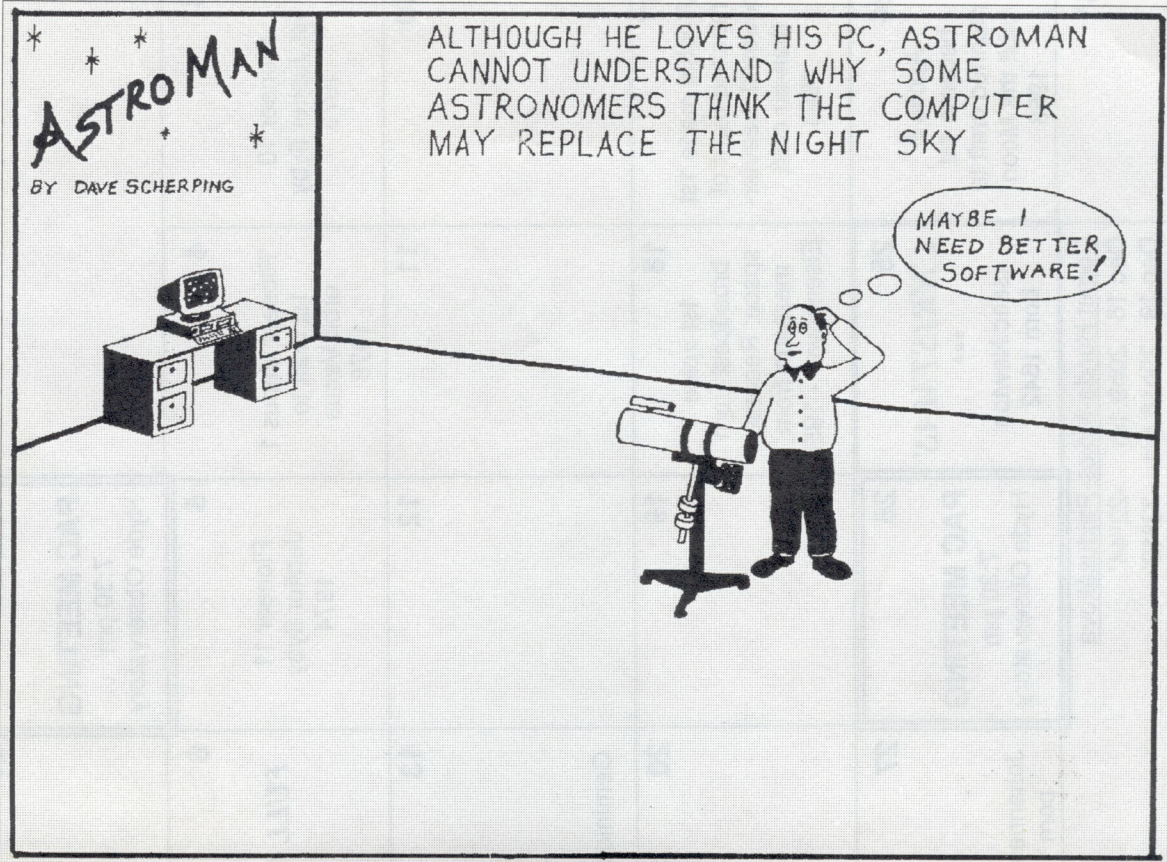
nsp-photos@infoanalytic.com
 (please use MIME encapsulation)

⇒ or mail to:

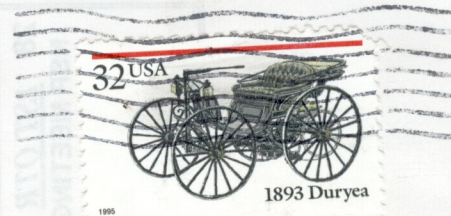
Mark Dahmke
 Box 80266
 Lincoln, NE 68501

The PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB
DECEMBER 1995

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		Nov 28 PAC MEETING 7:30 pm Hyde Observatory	29	30 NSP MEETING 7:00 pm at Mahoney State Park Lodge Goldenrod Room	1	2 Mars3 made 1st soft landing on Mars (USSR) 1971
3 Pioneer 10 1st Jupiter flyby 1973	4 Pioneer Venus 1 1st craft to orbit Venus 1978	5 Pioneer 11 Jupiter flyby 1974	6 FULL MOON	7 Apollo 17 launched for 6th & final manned landing on Moon -1972	8	9
10	11	12	13	14 3RD QTR MOON Geminids Peak *** Tycho Brahe born 1546	15	16
17 Wrights made 1st manned flight of powered, heavier- than-air craft 1903	18 1st voice broadcast from space: Recorded message from Eisenhower - 1958	19	20 Geminid meteors	21 NEW MOON Apollo 8 launched 1968	22 STAR PARTY Beaver Crossing WINTER SOLSTICE	23 STAR PARTY Rain Date
24 Apollo 8 became 1st manned craft to orbit the Moon 1968	25 CHRISTMAS *** Isaac Newton born 1642	26 PAC MEETING 7:30 pm Hyde Observatory	27 Johannes Kepler born 1571	28 1ST QTR NSP MEETING 7:00 pm at Mahoney State Park Lodge (TENTATIVE)	29	30
31	Comet Honda-Mrkos-Paidusáková Dec 16 20h9.1m -22°44' Dec 19 20h16.5m -22°12' Dec 22 20h22.6m -21°40' Dec 28 20h29.5m -20°03'					



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



Next Meeting
 November 28, 1995

First Class Mail

Mr. Earl Moser
 P. O. Box 162
 Hickman NE 68372

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

NOV