

President's Report by Dave Scherping



If you have access to internet, see our web page:

<http://www/infoanalytic.com/pac>

Or see The Omaha Astronomical Society web page:

<http://www/top.net/cdcheney>

JANUARY/FEBRUARY MEETING NOTICES:

GENERAL MEETING

TUESDAY, JANUARY 30th, 1996, 7:30 p.m.
at Hyde Memorial Observatory

NSP MEETING

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8th, 7:00 p.m.
at Mahoney State Park Lodge

STAR PARTY

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16th
at Beaver Crossing
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17th
(Rain/Snow Date)

GENERAL MEETING

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27th, 7:30 p.m.
at Hyde Memorial Observatory

The Prairie Astronomer

As we enter into another year, we can look forward to numerous PAC activities and several exciting astronomical events. These activities offer a variety of ways for PAC members to get involved. Let me summarize what I see are the highlights of the coming year.

We plan to again host ASTRONOMY DAY at Mueller Planetarium around the first of May. We will be looking for volunteers to coordinate and help out. We also plan on having our annual PAC PICNIC. We need to set the dates for these events at our next meeting.

There's also activities for the observers. We will again be sharing astronomy with the general public at MAHONEY STATE PARK. This is cosponsored by the Omaha Astronomical Society. The nights for this year's public observing nights are May 24, June 21, July 19, and September 20th. I encourage everyone to come and show their support. And let's not forget our monthly STAR PARTIES at Beaver Crossing or the Atlas Site. These always prove to be a good time (when the sky's clear). Also, HYDE OBSERVATORY is always looking for more amateur astronomers to help out on Saturday nights. Contact Erik Hubl for more information. Throughout the year, PAC members can get involved by offering to give a program at one of the monthly PAC meetings. Just contact Doug Bell and he'll be glad to fit you into the schedule.

The highlight of the year will probably be the NEBRASKA STAR PARTY, which we will host at Merritt Reservoir August 10-17. NSP has grown in leaps and bounds in its first two years and will undoubtedly be bigger than ever this year. We need a lot of volunteer support and participation.

Contact me for more information or show up at the next NSP planning meeting (see enclosed calendar).

For all of the latest info on PAC, those with computers should check out the PAC web site. If you haven't seen it lately, take a look. Mark Dahmke's added a lot of new things and updated others. It's really great. Thanks Mark.

As for astronomical events in 1996, here are a few of the highlights: On February 11th, Saturn's Rings disappear for the third and final time (until August 2009). This is due to Earth crossing the ring plane. The year also brings a couple of Lunar Eclipses; one on April 3rd and another on September 26/27. If you'd like to observe an Asteroid Occultation, there's a nice one on March 28th when Edith occults 6.3 magnitude star SAO184113 with a 9.1 magnitude drop. I'd like to organize a PAC occultation team to observe this event from several sites. There

are also a couple of less dramatic asteroid occultations visible from Lincoln on June 30th and July 15th. And let's not forget Comet Hale-Bopp, which will continue to brighten throughout the year and be well placed for observing from spring through late fall. Plus, at the rate comets have been discovered the past couple of months, we may be in for another nice comet or two as well. Meteor enthusiasts who attend NSP will be treated to a spectacular show as the Perseid Meteor Shower peaks near new moon on August 12th. On a similar note, could this be the year for the return of the Leonids meteor "storm"? Only time will tell.

In closing, I anticipate another great year for the Prairie Astronomy Club. There's a lot of areas for involvement and a great need for volunteers. I welcome your ideas and suggestions, so if there's something new you'd like to see us do, or something we should do differently, just let me know.

contents:

PRESIDENT'S REPORT & MEETING NOTICES
OBSERVING CHAIRMAN'S REPORT & SECRETARY'S REPORT
PAC CALENDAR
ASTROMAN

PAGE 1
PAGE 2
PAGE 3
PAGE 4

Observing Chairman's Report by Douglas Bell



MEETING ADJOURNED...

Secretary's Report by Bryan Schaaf



January 30, For January observing.

Next star party: February 16
New Moon: February 18
Lunar object: Hercules
Planet: Venus
Messier monthly: M 41
Top 40: M1
Deep sky: NGC 2841
Challenge: Details in M1

Tip of the month: Run, don't walk, to get your copy of the "Observer's Handbook of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada".

Quote of the Month: "Hey, where's your newsletter article?" - Anonymous

Lunar feature: Hercules Crater
A sharply defined double crater in the Moon's northeastern quarter. Look for the nearly concentric secondary crater inside.

Planet of the month: Venus
You always hear about Venus' changing phases, but it's the lovely sunsets that I enjoy most. This time of year, when the air is exceptionally transparent, lends itself to fabulous contrasts of the sharply defined horizon, a dark purple sky, and a brilliant planet.

Messier Monthly: M 41
A bright, coarse open cluster just south of Sirius. Gaze around and see what's close.

Top 40: M1
I guess that 1054 must have been a good year. Very few astronomical events are recorded in history. This is one. What did the ancients think when their "perfect" heavens suddenly produced a bright new star?

Deep Sky: NGC 2841
A classic barred spiral; in that home of great galaxies, Ursa Major. (There ought to be plenty, the darn thing's big enough).

Challenge: The tendrils in M1.
Up for a real challenge? M1 is not too hard to find, but seeing detail is another matter. My eight inch shows nothing more than a slightly peanut shaped fuzzy.

Astro trivia:
Dwight Eisenhower used astronomers to set the date for the Normandy invasion. What sign was Eisenhower and why did astronomy affect the invasion plans?

Last month's answer:
The latest sunrise at 40 degrees is about January 7th, not December 21st. The reason is that our elliptical, not circular, orbit puts us ahead of schedule. The effect is also noted in the latest sunset (July 1st) and the earliest sunset (December 8th).

Vice President Kelly Erlandson began the meeting at 7:37 p.m. as President Dave Scherping was en route for the meeting from York, NE.

First on the agenda was a light shielding report from Erik Hubl. He contacted Mr. Bowman, the owner of the house and the surrounding land adjacent to our Atlas Observing Site. The following are Erik's words:

"He was very insistant that he would not install the metal shield that was shown to him because he feels it will block too much light from his area. He wants his light to be able to shine down to the trees, to help illuminate when picking up bales, for security and as he chooses.

"He said he would be willing to work with us to explore other alternatives including giving him notice of when we are observing and he will gladly turn it off. He even gave us his work number."

*Toby & Kari Bowman Leach Camper Sales of Lincoln
RR1 2727 Cornhusker Hwy.
Firth, NE. 68358 Lincoln, NE 68504
791-2072 Home 466-8581 Work*

A suggestion was made that we consider planting trees to help block the light. Erik added that we could maybe construct a blockade of some sort.

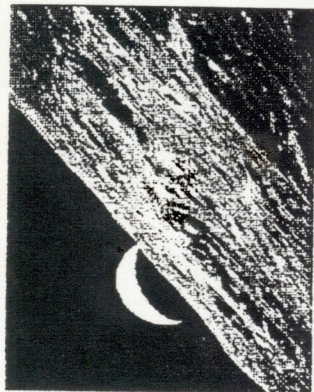
Kelly did send in the NSP T-shirt orders and those shirts were recieved by John Bruce. At the adjournment of the meeting the following quantities and sizes were still available: 3 medium, 5 large, 6 XL, and 14 XXL. Contact John Bruce if you would like to snatch up any of these (before they're gone).

The 3rd annual (new) NSP registration brochures were mailed out and some were handed out at the meeting. If you want one contact Dave Scherping.

Program Chairman Doug Bell distributed Jupiter-SL9 Impact posters to anyone that wanted them, compliments of Jack Dunn.

Doug introduced Larry Stepp, Optics Manager of Gemini Telescopes. Larry (a one time local member of PAC) spoke about the International 8 Meter Gemini Telescope Project. He showed overhead projections of digital photographs of observatory sites under construction world-wide and the production process of their main mirrors. He told a story about a finished mirror that was gently hoisted into a specially constructed mirror container and shipped (on a ship!) across the Atlantic Ocean to France only two weeks ago! Larry's presentation was over an hour in duration, but his audience was hanging on every word.

One last note about a detail that was mistakenly left out of the meeting: John Bruce expects that the astronomical publications orders (RASC Handbook, Ottewell Calendar, wall calendars, ect.) will be received by the time you read this. This means that if you made such an order and haven't paid for it yet, then be sure to bring cash or a checkbook to the January meeting! See you there.



Earthrise from Apollo 17 (1972)

The Prairie Astronomy Club

February 1996

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
<p>Mira (Omicron Ceti), a red long period variable star will brighten to 6th mag. the first week of this month and is expected to reach 3rd (maximum) magnitude around March 11.</p> <p>Scheduled space launches this month: Feb. 20 Soyuz TM-23 Feb. 22 STS-75, Columbia Space Shuttle Feb. 23 NEAR Delta 2*</p>						
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Full Moon 9:58 am Clyde Tombaugh born, 1906	Mariner 10, 1st close-up images of Venus, 1974	Comet Honda- Mrkos-Pajdusakova closest to Earth	Bruce McCandless, 1st untethered space walk, 1984	NSP MEETING 7:00 pm at Ma- honey State Park Lodge	Venus (mag. -4.0) passes 1.3 deg. north of Saturn (mag. 0.4), 8 pm	Comet Hale-Bopp reappears from behind the Sun
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Earth passes through ring-plane of Saturn, 8 pm	Lincoln's Birthday Last Quarter Moon 2:37 am	Valentine's Day Chiron at Perihelion	Moon passes 5 deg. north of Jupiter (mag. -1.9) 9 am Galileo born, 1564	STAR PARTY at Beaver Crossing G. Kuiper discov- ers Miranda, 1948	STAR PARTY at Beaver Crossing (Rain/Snow Date)	STAR PARTY at Beaver Crossing (Rain/Snow Date)
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
New Moon 5:30 pm Pluto discovered by C. Tombaugh, 1930	President's Day N. Copernicus born, 1473	Mercury Friend- ship 7 launched - John Glenn, 1st American in orbit, 1962	Moon 1 deg. south of Venus (Occulta- tion at Hawaii)	Washington's Birthday	Supernova 1987A explodes, 1987	Discovery of 1st pulsar announced from U.K., 1968
25	26	27	28	29	<p>10th anniversary launch this month: Feb. 19, 1986 Mir Space Station Scheduled spacecraft return this month: Feb. 29 Soyuz TM-22 *NEAR (Near Earth Asteroid Ren- dezvous) will rendezvous with asteroid 433 Eros in January 1999.</p>	
First Quarter Moon 11:52 pm	Scheduled launch of Apollo 1 that never happened, 1967	PAC MEETING 7:30 pm at Hyde Observatory	First Earth polar orbit was achieved, 1959	Asteroid Nysa at opposition		

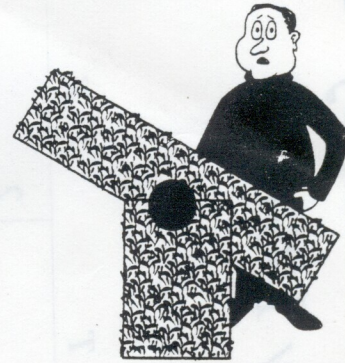
IMPORTANT NSP ISSUE

A bill (HR2644) was introduced to Congress on November 15, 1995 by Pat Roberts (R-KS) proposing the sale of 5 Nebraska lakes and 4 Kansas lakes to area Irrigation Districts. This included Merritt Reservoir, home of NSP. Without going into alot of detail, if this proposal was passed, the Irrigation Districts could basically do whatever they wanted with Merritt and if they choose to still allow public access, they could charge whatever they like. Moreover, they could force Jon Davenport to give up his business (Merritt Resort). In the past 2 years, we have built a very good relationship with both Nebraska Game & Parks and Jon Davenport, which has been key in making NSP a success. We would be back at ground zero if this bill were to be passed. Supposedly, Pat Roberts has since suspended his efforts with HR2644. It's still possible, however that this or a similar bill could be passed with little or no public input. At the last NSP meeting, Kelly Erlandson volunteered to head up a task force to express our concerns. If you'd like more information, contact Kelly Erlandson, Tom Miller, or Dave Scherping. I urge those who are willing, to write our Congressmen and Senators. We'll discuss this in more detail at the January PAC meeting.

— Dave Scherping

AstroMan
By Dave Scherping

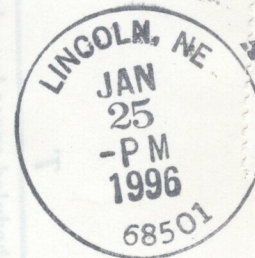
The latest gift for the astronomer who has everything...
The CHIA TELESCOPE !!!
Just add dew and watch it grow !



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 Memorial Observatory in Lincoln, Nebraska.



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



First Class Mail

Next Meeting
January 30, 1996

JAN 96

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