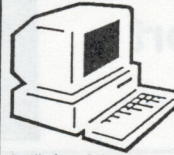


President's Report

by Dave Scherping



If you have access to Internet, see the Prairie Astronomy Club web page:
<http://infoanalytic.com/pac/>
 E-mail us at: pac@infoanalytic.com
 Omaha Astronomical Society web page:
<http://www.top.net/cdcheney>

JUNE/JULY MEETING NOTICES:

MAHONEY PUBLIC STAR PARTY
 FRIDAY, JUNE 21st
 at Mahoney State Park
 on the Soccer Field

ATLAS SITE WORK BEE
 SUNDAY, JUNE 23rd, 2:00 p.m.
 (If you are late, come out anyway)

GENERAL MEETING
 TUESDAY, JUNE 25th, 7:30 p.m.
 at Hyde Memorial Observatory

NSP MEETING
 WEDNESDAY, JUNE 26th, 7:30 p.m.
 at Mahoney State Park Lodge

STAR PARTY
 FRIDAY, JULY 12th, at the Atlas Site
 SATURDAY, JULY 13th (Rain Date)

NSP MEETING
 THURSDAY, JULY 25th, 7:30 p.m.
 at Mahoney State Park Lodge

Briefs continued:

I observed Comet Hale-Bopp with 7x50 binoculars throughout the July 7th weekend (2:00 AM). From my less than dark sky location at home and at Branched Oak Lake, it appeared elongated and hazy. Telescopically the comet didn't look much different, just more magnified. - Bryan Schaaf

I saw Comet Hale-Bopp naked eye June 11, Tuesday morning (barely). - Dave Knisely

I enjoyed Doug Bell's program about "dew" at the last PAC meeting. I didn't know that dew could be so much a problem for observers. He forgot to mention the "mosquito" problem. - Liz Bergstrom

On June 15th, we held a program for the public at Anderson Library. I presented a slide show about the Solar System and showed several slides representing deep sky objects that can be seen through amateur telescopes. Doc Manthey set up his Questar for display and Jerry Williams helped out by running the projector and answering questions. Although we didn't have a lot of visitors, it opened the door for similar programs in the future. They want us to return in January. Thanks Doc & Jerry for helping out.

On June 21st and July 19th, we will again try to hold a public observing night at Mahoney State Park. Hopefully the weather will cooperate this time. If it is clear, we'll need a lot of support from PAC members. We typically draw about 200 visitors and need all the scopes we can get.

The 3rd annual Nebraska Star Party is only 1.5 months away. At the time you read this, there will only be a few days before the registration fee increases (July 1). Contact Tom Miller at 466-4145 to register. NSP planning meetings are scheduled for June 26th & July 12th at the Mahoney State Park Lodge (7:30 p.m.). Volunteers are urged to attend.

Jack Dunn and I are lining up the speakers for NSP and will publish a list of programs in next month's newsletter. Meanwhile, door prizes continue to come in. There has been a tremendous response to our donation requests, including a 90mm Maksutov telescope valued at \$500, that was recently donated by Meade! Louis Dorland has set up a web site where we can see what's been donated:
<http://www.papillion.ne.us/~ldorland/pages/nsp3.html>

BRIEFS:

Jake Winemiller's name was mistakenly left off the membership list in the April newsletter. His address/ phone number is:
 325 Main Sterling, Ne. 68443 402-866-2244
 Also Bev Hetzel's old address was printed in the list. Her correct address/ phone number is:
 3303 Orchard St., Lincoln, NE. 68503 402-464-2009
 - Bryan Schaaf

Just a reminder... The NSP registration (cost) goes up on July 1st. Call either Tom Miller (466-4145) or me (477-2596) if you have a question or need more information. - Dave Scherping

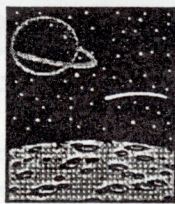
Continued next column

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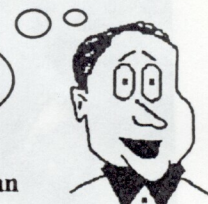
Observing Chairman's Report

by Douglas Bell



Questions & Answers

I hope these
answers are correct.



Conducted by AstroMan

For July 1996 Observing:

New Moon:	July 15	Top 40:	Albireo
Lunar object:	Clavius	Deep sky:	NGC 5897
Planet:	Gas Giants	Challenge:	Hale-Bopp naked eye
Messier monthly:	M 10		

Tip of the month: Scan Sagittarius and Ophiuchus with binoculars. How many Messiers can you see?

Lunar feature: Clavius crater

When does a crater cease being a crater and start being an impact basin? Clavius is still called a crater, but it's a matter of degree. Look for a big, old, crater on the Moon's south end. By the way, the crater is so big that you can't see its walls if you're standing in the center of the crater.

Planet of the month: The Gas Giants

About time we had some decent planets to look at. This month Jupiter, Uranus, and Neptune all reach opposition. A few years ago Uranus and Neptune had a triple conjunction and were in the same wide field view. If you missed it maybe your great-great-great grandchildren can try again.

Messier Monthly: M 10

A fine open cluster in Ophiuchus (you know I've been doing this too long when I can spell Orphiucus without looking).

Top 40: Albireo

One of the premier double stars. The southern tip of the cross in Cygnus is a fine contrast of colored stars. Who said astronomy is in black and white? (Well ok, I did, but I take it back).

Deep Sky: NGC 5897

A large, faint, and loose globular in Libra. "Requires large aperture to resolve". Oh, oh.

Challenge: Hale-Bopp naked eye

Believe it or not, Comet Hale-Bopp is reaching naked eye visibility. This is going to be a great project following it along the sky. Try it the next time you're at a dark site.

Astro trivia: How many of the solar system's satellites are bigger than Mercury?

Last months answer: The final score: Sagittarius 15, Virgo 11. Many Messier objects are visible naked-eye, most are easy with binoculars.

Q: Several weeks ago I happened to watch The Learning Channel on T.V. The program dealt with the alignment of the three large pyramids and the Sphinx located on the Giza plateau in Egypt. Apparently they were part of a star map recreated as a guide to the stars in the belt of Orion with the Nile River representing the Milky Way. Further study has shown that the pyramids that were built by the Nile River approximately 2,500 to 3,500 years ago do not match the stars that were in view at the time of their construction, but actually match the star placement in the belt of the constellation Orion which was in view some 8,000 to 10,000 years prior to their building. The theory proposed this alignment is a religious one and that it lead to the road to the future life after death.

If this is a recreated star map, why did the Orion belt stars not line up correctly with the placement of the pyramids at the time of the construction? Also, why do the belt stars currently in view still not line up with the star map?

A: I didn't see the show about which you are referring, so far be it from me to criticize modern "science". Perhaps there is something valid to the "alignment" of the Giza pyramids and the Sphinx to represent a star map (albeit a crude one). There have been all sorts of studies about the fascinating mysteries that abound from the construction of the Giza Pyramids and the Sphinx. If I remember right, there have been measurements made of the Cheops Pyramid that *could* proportionately represent astronomical distances within our solar system, but so what? About the alleged star map, numerous such star representations are possible, limited only by the imagination. Why pick the Orion belt stars? There must be numerous other star patterns that would fit equally well or better.

Carl Sagan's science series "Cosmos" cites a case about which two people supposedly witnessed a alien "encounter of the third kind" and having seen a star map aboard the alien spacecraft, the detailed star map was subsequently reproduced by one of the witnesses by memory. The conjecture was that the map reproduction nearly exactly matched a pattern of known stars as they would appear from a interstellar vantage point. Carl Sagan then dutifully demonstrated that the star map in question could easily be matched or mismatched with known documented star patterns simply by rearranging the connecting lines between the star dots on the map. This could be analogous to cloud patterns that one might see and imagine to look like a animal, person or thing: "Gee, that cloud looks like a dragon!"

Assuming the theory is correct, perhaps the stars' proper motions have changed their relative positions. Or, perhaps the construction alignments of the structures weren't adequately precise to represent the Orion belt stars. Or, perhaps the Nile River channel had changed. Or, perhaps precession has a role in this. Or, perhaps....

Questions about astronomy or PAC can be confidentially sent to AstroMan in care of Bryan Schaaf (see address and phone number below).

The Prairie Astronomer is published monthly by the Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc., and is free to all club members. Membership expiration date is 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) ten days prior to the club meeting. Club meetings are held the last Tuesday of each month at Hyde Memorial Observatory in Lincoln, Nebraska.

MEETING ADJOURNED...



Secretary's Report by Bryan Schaaf

The May 28th PAC meeting at Hyde Memorial Observatory began at 7:30 P.M. As usual the meeting began with the "Introduction of Visitors" and a review of "What's Up" in the sky to see this month. There was one visitor.

Astronomy Day/International Space Station Exhibit Week were great successes. Jack Dunn relayed some attendance numbers to us: For the week of the International Space Station Exhibit, there were about 18,350 people and of those about 3600 walked through the exhibit on Astronomy Day (April 27th). At least 1100 persons were in the museum on Astronomy Day.

The next NSP organizational meeting is (was) June 5th. Anyone that has volunteered for anything about NSP are (were) encouraged to attend, because the meeting is an important one that will tie all sorts of NSP details together. The following NSP meeting, June 26th is equally important, so please attend.

Tom Miller reported that there "are between 50 and 60 NSP registrants, so far". It is time to pay for NSP registrations! The rate increases after June 30th! Along with that, deposits for cabin rentals are also due.

The 13" club Dobsonian telescope is available for loan to any PAC member. Contact Dave Hamilton if you are interested. His office phone number is 434-2900.

The 12.5" club Newtonian telescope housed in Earl Moser's shed needs to be removed and transported to it's temporary new home at Tom Miller's place. There was a call for volunteers and four individuals responded - with some hesitation; Jason Stahl, Ron Veys, Bryan Schaaf and Dave Scherping. I know the four of us don't want to do it ourselves.

Various observing program brochures were offered by Dave Scherping and Ron Veys. The brochures cover the following Astronomical League observing programs: The Meteor Club, The Binocular Messier Club, The Deep Sky Binocular Club, The Southern Skies Binocular Club (for the southern hemisphere), The Messier Club, The Herschel Club and The Sunspotter.

Dave Scherping enjoyed the task of announcing that Ron Veys has acquired the Deep Sky Binocular Certificate. Ron is the first PAC member to complete this program and encouraged all others to do the same, because it is fun to do! His certificate number is 49, meaning he is the 49th individual to complete the program. He reported that he did most of his binocular observing from his backyard. There are sixty objects to view.

"Most of the objects are open star clusters and, I think, only two are galaxies", he said. "What is great about observing with binoculars is that everything you see in binoculars is 'right-side-up' just like what you see on the star maps."

The meeting ended at 8:05 P.M. and Program Chairman Doug Bell (for lack of any other presenter) presented the program which he entitled "The Bell Dilemma". The what?

"Yes, that's right. I can name the program anything I want, because I'm doing the program".

The "Bell Dilemma" is as follows: "When observing you either have warm distorted optics or cold foggy optics". He described the conditions present that form dew and provided ten different strategies to overcome dew. Briefly the ten strategies are:

1. Quit observing ("This isn't acceptable, because that's the weenie thing to do and none of us are weenies".)
2. Move to Arizona
3. Buy cheap stuff (equipment such as a telescope, star charts, etc.) so when it gets dewy, throw it away.
4. Waterproof your equipment; i.e. laminate your star charts.
5. Point the objective of your telescope downward.
6. Shut your eyepiece case to keep eyepieces dry.
7. Apply a dew shield over your telescope objective.
8. Apply a dew shield over your Telrad.
9. Blast the dew with the atomic nuclear dew blasting device; a small hair dryer.
10. Use a "dew rope" available at Radio Shack or make your own heating element device.

Comet Hale-Bopp Reports:

by Liz Bergstrom
MAY 15, 1996



Ever since the April 30th PAC meeting I have tried from my back yard to locate Comet HB in the morning sky. I have been able to locate the position where the comet should appear, but have not seen it. One morning, though, on May 1st, at 4:34 A.M. I thought that I had seen a very faint fuzzy just to the southeast of star 55 Sagittarii, near where I expected the comet. I have also seen other features of the sky that I did not realize were in view at this early time in the morning.

As of this writing, for May, we have had 21 days/mornings with clouds and 5 days/mornings when it was reasonably clear for viewing. Of those "clear" days the sky has had what I call a silvery cast to it.

Hopefully the clouds and bad weather will clear out so that the comet can be seen. So far this year has been an exciting one for comet lovers.

June 15th, 1996

The past week and a half I found Comet HB. It was northeast of Jupiter. Sunday morning, June 9th, at 3:00- 4:30 a.m. I observed the comet in all it's glory with 10 x 50 binoculars. It was a beautiful blue-green ball. About 3 degrees southwest, near open star cluster NGC 6774, I could just make out Comet Kopff.

The sky was very clear with little humidity. Open star cluster M7 in Scorpius was like a sparkly jewel in the sky with binoculars.

Before the end of June Comet HB will cross the constellation boundary from Sagittarius (the archer) into Scutum (the shield).

The Prairie Astronomy Club

July 1996

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
7 Saturn 3 deg. S. of Moon, 1 A.M. LAST QUARTER MOON 1:55 P.M.	8 Comet Kopff closest approach to Earth (0.5651 AU)	9 Voyager 2 flies past Jupiter, 1979 Galileo Orbital trim Manuver #7 Global Positioning Satellite 26, Scheduled Delta launch	10 Telstar, 1st communications satellite launched, 1962	11 Skylab Space Station reentry, burnup, 1979 Comet Kopff at opposition	12 STAR PARTY AT ATLAS SITE Moon passes 0.4 deg. N. of Venus, 4 A.M.	13 STAR PARTY AT ATLAS SITE (Rain Date)
14 Mars 4, first Mars flyby, 1965	15 Comet Hale-Bopp, 6 magnitude, less than 1 deg. N. of open star cluster NGC 6649 18h34.7m -10o29' NEW MOON 11:15 P.M.	16 Asteroid 2 Pallas 1 degree N.E. of Arcturus today and next 3 days, 9.6 magnitude Moon at apogee, 252,648 miles 8:34 AM Apollo 11 launch, 1969	17 Venus at greatest brilliancy, -4.5 magnitude First photograph of a star (Vega), 1850 Apollo/Soyuz link-up, 1975	18 Neptune at opposition Gemini 10 launch, 1966	19 MAHONEY STAR PARTY AT STATE PARK SOCCER FIELD	20 Viking 1 lands on Mars, 1976 Apollo 11 lands on Moon, 1969
21 Liberty Bell 7 launch/Guss Grissom, 1961	22	23 FIRST QUARTER MOON 12:49 PM	24 1st rocket launch from Cape Canaveral (German V2), 1950 Apollo 11 splashdown, 1969	25 Uranus at opposition	26 Apollo 15 launch, 1971	27
28 Jupiter 5 deg. S. of Moon 11 A.M. Ranger 7 Impacts Moon, first closeup images, 1964 First photo of total solar eclipse, 1851	29 NASA founded 1958	30 PAC MEETING 7:30 PM AT HYDE MEMORIAL OBS. Moon at Perigee 221,797 miles, 2:36 A.M. FULL MOON 5:35 AM	31 Apollo 15 lands on Moon, first to carry lunar roving vehicle, 1971	<p>The Moon will reach it's closest perigee distance of the year and it's farthest apogee distance of the year this month. Jupiter rises at sunset, is due south at midnight and sets at sunrise this month. Try looking for Comet Hale-Bopp with binoculars 12 degrees north of Jupiter late in the first week through the beginning of the third week, when there's no moon-light interference. This month it is possible to see Uranus (mag. 5.7) with binoculars or see it by direct vision from a dark location. Look for the tiny greenish disk 5 degrees west of Uranus and about 1.4 degrees south-southeast of 57 Sagittarii. 7x50 binoculars will show a "greenish star". A telescope will show it as a pale blue-green disk. Ringed Saturn rises about midnight the first week of July, but is in the eastern evening sky by the end of July. Venus will ascend quickly in the morning sky and rises 2 hours before the Sun on July 15th.</p>		
1 Moon at perigee, 222,419 miles from Earth 5:12 PM Comet Hale-Bopp, 6.3 magnitude, 3 deg. S.E. of open cluster M26 18h54.7m -11o53'	2 Comet Kopff at perihelion (1.579 AU)	3	4 Comet Hale-Bopp at opposition (rises when the Sun sets) Jupiter at opposition Crab Nebula Supernova first seen, 1054 A.D.	5 Earth at Aphelion (farthest from Sun), 94509780 miles Progress M32 launch (Russia) Arabsat/Turksat Ariane 4 launch	6 "Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica" published by Isaac Newton, 1687	

Antique Telescope

by Liz Bergstrom

A friend of mine has an antique telescope which has been in his family for at least 90 to 100 years. It belonged to his granddad, who lived near Shelton, Nebraska where he died at the age of 80+ in 1944. The family came to the U.S. from Edinburgh, Scotland some time during the late 1860's just after the Civil War.

He, the grandfather, was either born in Scotland and came to the U.S. as a tiny baby or was born in the U.S. very shortly after the family settled in the states, probably near North Bend, Nebraska.

As a young man, around the late 1880's he married, moved with his new bride to northwestern Arkansas and started his own sawmill. While living in Arkansas the family had several children, one of whom died in infancy. After this tragedy the family packed their wagon and moved back to Nebraska settling again near north Bend, where he again set up a sawmill.

Sometime later the family moved to near Spaulding, Nebraska, where he opened a lumber yard business. Then, in the family's travels he acquired the telescope either as a trade/payment for lumber or actually ordered it from a mail order catalogue. This may have been in the late 1890's or early 1900's.

The telescope is a 3 inch refractor made of brass with an oak tripod stand. On the back of the main tube there are the words "BARDOU & SONS PARIS" with a small trademark at the bottom.

My friend said that his grandfather enjoyed looking at the stars in the sand hills where, at that time, the skies were exceptionally black. He also enjoyed a drink or two and was a bible reader who could quote the bible backwards and forwards. He enjoyed arguing theological points with the local clergy especially the local priest. My friend can remember going to visit his granddad who would take him out to the hills to look at the stars. There, his granddad would point out many of the constellations and tell him stories about them. Sometimes he would also quote from the bible while they were observing.

The quest now is to find out the age, the manufacturer, the history of the telescope and from where it was originally purchased. Also, in order to refurbish/restore it, I need to know how to accomplish this task. Perhaps there is someone who is familiar with this type of telescope or the manufacturer who would share their information with me.

Liz Bergstrom
6611 Vine Street
Lincoln, NE 68505-2234

A HISTORY OF THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB:

THE EARLY YEARS (PART ONE)

by David Knisely

The Prairie Astronomy Club can trace its beginnings to the time of November 7th, 1960, when Mercury transited the sun, prompting an article in the newspaper which generated some local interest. The article mentioned that Professor Carroll Moore was going to observe the transit from Nebraska Wesleyan University. Several astronomy enthusiasts joined Professor Moore in observing the transit from the campus and afterwards decided to have a meeting sometime in the near future. Widespread media publicity brought the attention of others interested in astronomy and informal meetings began in the basement of Van Fleet Hall of Science at Wesleyan.

In April, 1961, a constitution was adopted by the 14 charter members, and the Prairie Astronomy Club of Lincoln was formally established. The charter members were:

Walter Erbach	Harlan Franey	Faun Fritz	Dick Hartley
Jim Hoskins	Phillip Johnson	Rick Johnson	Werner Klammer
Carroll Moore	Tom Pansing	Philo Prell	Eugene Robertson
Pete Schultz	Jess Williams		

The meeting place was moved to the upstairs lecture hall in the Van Fleet building later in 1961, and an informal newsletter was started late that year by Jess Williams. On June 30th, 1961, the first club star party was held at the home of Dick Hartley. On April 6th, 1962, the first issue of the club's official monthly publication, THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMER, was issued and edited by Pete Schultz. Club activities expanded to public sky shows when on August 9th, 1962, the first Gateway Shopping Center astronomy show was held.

In October of 1962, the club was first affiliated with SKY AND TELESCOPE offering the magazine to its members as a direct benefit of membership. In 1963, the club moved its meetings to the University of Nebraska State Museum. From 1964 to 1965, the meeting place was changed to Union Loan & Savings at 56th and "O" street.

With telescopes in short supply, in July of 1965, the club began discussing some form of club observatory, which later led to the purchase in August, 1967, of a 12.5 inch f/6 equatorially mounted Newtonian from an amateur in the state of Washington. The telescope's cost was paid for partly through member donations over several years, and the club's "mortgage" on the scope was later burned in a spectacular ceremony by placing it at the telescope's focus and pointing the instrument at the sun! The club scope made numerous trips to the monthly Gateway shows, where it attracted much attention and a few new club members. It was later housed in a tilt-off metal building at Earl Moser's rural residence near Hickman.

In December of 1965, the Prairie Astronomy Club was formally incorporated as a non-profit corporation through the efforts of Phillip and Rick Johnson.

Next Month: "The Seventies and Beyond, Part Two"

EARLY ASTRONOMY AT N.U.

by Professor William G. Leavitt

My first contact with astronomy was in the fall of 1926 when my father took me to several evening public lectures by Professor Swezey, in his little observatory just south of Brace Physics Lab. Swezey's lectures were interesting and he usually had a few slides to show. However the high point came when everyone got a chance to climb up the stairs to the little dome at the west end of the observatory and take a look through the 4 inch refractor telescope. This was usually pointed at a double star, but sometimes other objects like the moon or Saturn.

According to the article by Gene Rudd (*Sky and Telescope*, May 1996) astronomy was on the books at the University of Nebraska since its inception in 1871, but I doubt if it was ever offered until Swezey joined the university staff at about the turn of the century. Professor M.G. Gaba (math) gave me this account of how the astronomy program started. It seems that Swezey was the only competent meteorologist in the state at the time, so he was head of the US Weather Bureau as well as an astronomy professor at Doane College. According to Gaba, university authorities felt that for prestige reasons the weather bureau ought to be on the university campus, but in order to persuade Swezey to come they also had to establish an astronomy program. Thus the little observatory was built.

When I was a student at the university (1933-38) it was the Department of Mathematics and Astronomy. I assumed that they had always been together but Rudd says this didn't happen until Swezey retired in 1932. The department hired Oliver Collins as his replacement, and since by now only the little elementary course was offered, Collins had to teach math more than half time. During the period 1935-37 Collins was on leave, replaced by Carl Rust who was half time in Physics rather than in math. I finally got around to taking the first half of the elementary course my junior year, but instead of taking the second semester of the course Rust asked me to be an astronomy assistant. My job was to run the night lab, set up the telescope for what was to be viewed that night, and go out with groups of students for star classes.

Carl Rust was a very enthusiastic scientist, encouraging me to write an honors thesis (on Celestial Mechanics), and giving a series of astronomical talks over KFAB radio. He also wanted to do some serious research in astronomy and somewhere got hold of a good 12 inch mirror. He persuaded the university to provide a mounting, which was housed in a little shed out on the Ag campus. I was out there a few times in 1937 but we never did get it to function properly. Carl Rust departed when Collins returned in the fall of 1937, and as far as I know nobody ever did use this telescope.

I returned to the university as an Instructor in 1947, after I got my Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. The little observatory south of Brace Lab was gone, replaced by some W.W.II Quonset huts that remained there for quite a long time. Ferguson Hall had taken the place of the decrepit old University Hall and the 4 inch refractor was mounted in a little shed on the roof. Collins' eyesight was getting progressively worse, so of course he did no observing and was even having difficulty handling his classes. After I took over as Chairman of Mathematics and Astronomy (1954) Collins left for a job in Minnesota. It was clear that with our meager facilities we had no hope of attracting an astronomer, and in any case I was in desperate need of a mathematics staff. So I

kept astronomy going by hiring Carroll Moore, who taught astronomy at Wesleyan. He taught night classes twice a week. However even that arrangement died after a few years. I was sad, as much as I've always loved astronomy, to be the one who presided over its demise at Nebraska.

By the early 1960's the little shed on top of Ferguson Hall was in very bad shape, with the rusting telescope inside hardly working any more. So we stored it away along with the few other things Collins had left behind. Soon after Ed Halfar took over as Chairman in 1964 he arranged to have the remains of the astronomy equipment transferred to the Physics Department, which then became the Department of Physics and Astronomy. I thoroughly approved of this action because I had always felt that astronomy was much closer to physics than it was to math. I was surprised (and most certainly pleased) that from this low point the Physics Department was able to develop a really viable astronomy program. One especially high point came when the Behlens gave the money for a good observatory at Mead.

Charles Minnich and the 12 Inch Lens by Professor William G. Leavitt

I knew Charles Minnich quite well when he was an engineering student here in the 1930's. We were both in the band (he played a clarinet) and graduated the same year. I also knew about the 12 inch refractor his grandfather had ground and presented to the university, although at the time I didn't connect it with the Charles Minnich I knew. Carl Rust (who was teaching the astronomy courses while Oliver Collins was on leave) told me about the lens the year I was an astronomy assistant (1936-37). He told me it was stored away in a closet in the old Administration Building (though I never saw it). He also said that Collins had sent it in somewhere to be tested, and had been told it was defective and would have to be extensively reground to be useable.

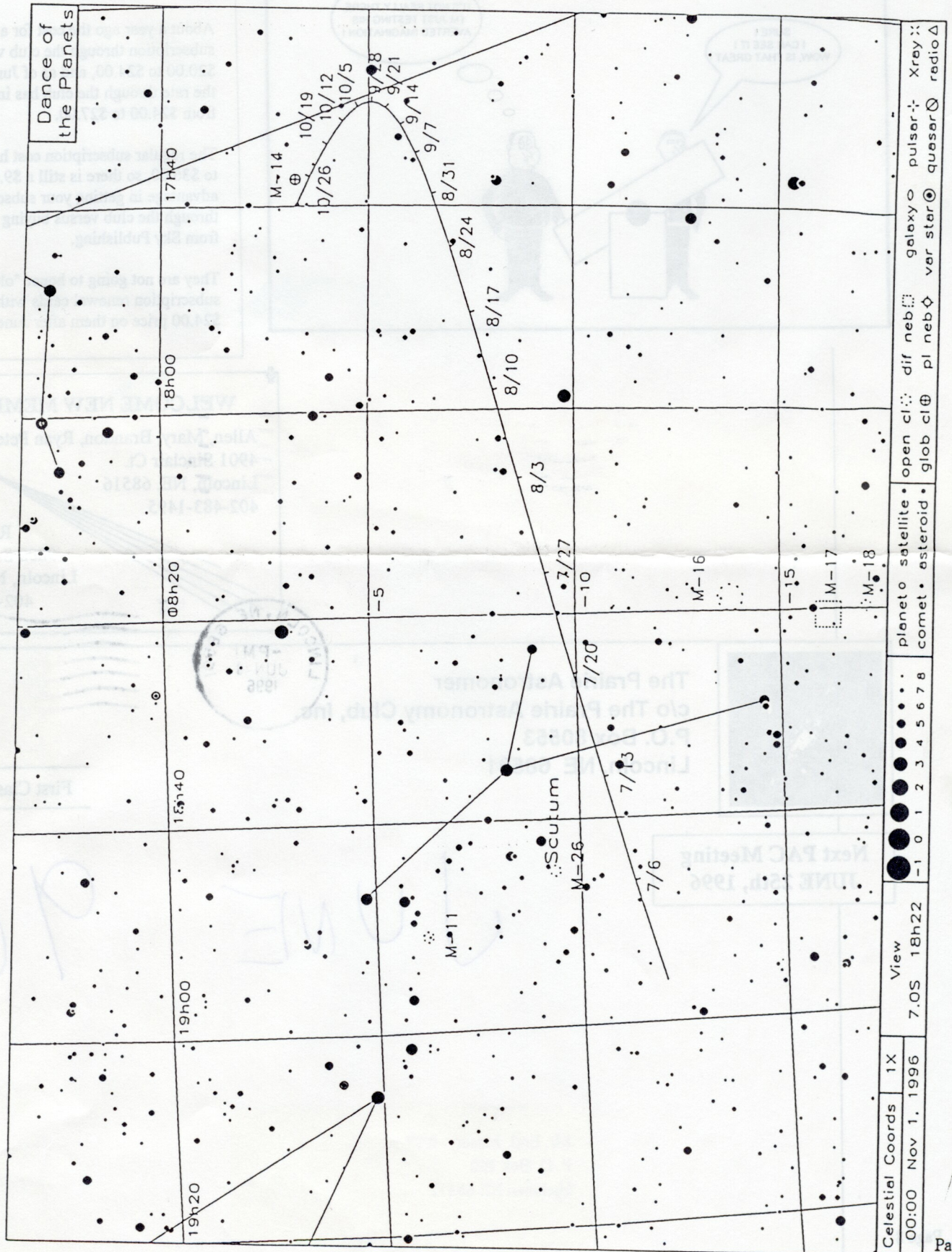
In the early 1960's, while I was Chairman of Mathematics and Astronomy, but after Collins had left, I got a letter from Minnich who said he was a member of an astronomy club in Kansas City. He asked me about the lens his grandfather had given the university (which he knew had never been used) and said that he and his club would like to have it if we still had no use for it. So I instituted a thorough search around the university, finding no record of the lens or anyone who remembered ever seeing it. At the same time I sent an inquiry to Collins, also asking him about the report that the lens had been judged defective. I never heard from Collins, so I had to write back to Minnich informing him of the negative result of my search.

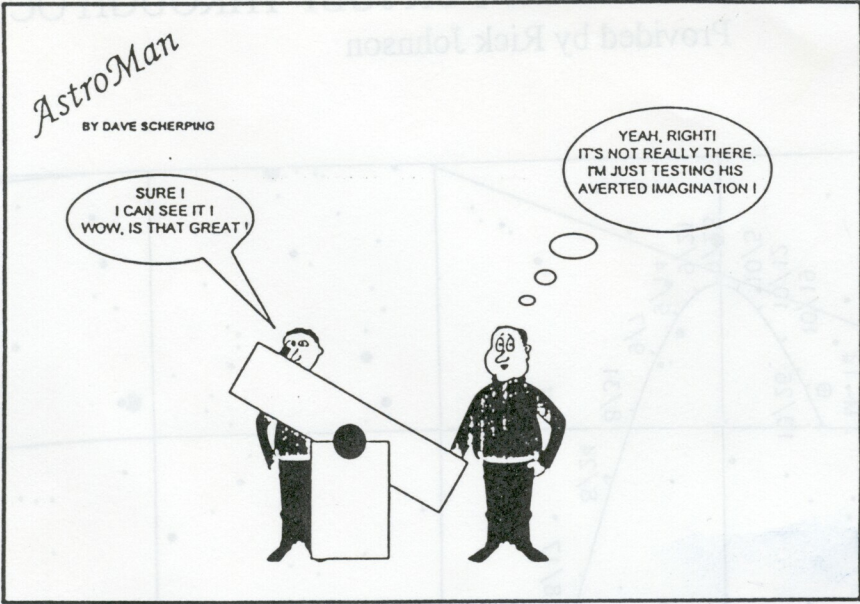
I don't remember if I also told Minnich about the possibility that the lens would have needed regrinding. Perhaps not, because in 1973 he wrote another letter, this time to the Department of Physics and Astronomy, again asking for the lens and again resulting in a futile university-wide search. Evidently he didn't tell them about the earlier search I'd conducted, and I didn't find out about this search until later. Despite the negative results, Minnich nevertheless generously donated a lens and the construction costs for a student telescope mounted in a Ferguson Hall window, as well as a gift to support an astronomical computing center. I came to the dedication ceremony for the student telescope, and it was pleasant to meet Minnich again after many years.

Professor William G. Leavitt is an emeritus professor of mathematics at UNL. He was Chairman of the Mathematics and Astronomy department from 1954 - 1964. The articles "Telescope in a Window" and "The Observatory That Never Was" in the May issue of Sky & Telescope, and his son, Bob Leavitt, inspired him to write about his own experiences regarding these events.

COMET HALE-BOPP FINDER CHART FOR JULY THROUGH OCTOBER

Provided by Rick Johnson





**SKY & TELESCOPE MAGAZINE
RATE TO INCREASE**

Sky & Telescope has once again raised the cost of a subscription.

About a year ago the cost for a one year subscription through the club went from \$20.00 to \$24.00, and as of June 15, 1996 the rate through the club has increased from \$24.00 to \$27.00.

The regular subscription cost has gone up to \$36.00, so there is still a \$9.00 advantage in getting your subscription through the club versus buying it direct from Sky Publishing.

They are not going to honor "old" subscription renewal cards with the \$24.00 price on them after June 15th.

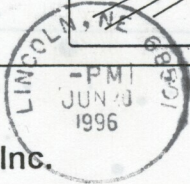
WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Allen, Mary, Brandon, Ryan Peters
4901 Sinclair Ct.
Lincoln, NE. 68516
402-483-1495

Robert Opp
9200 S. 64th Cir.
Lincoln, NE. 68516
402-423-6841



The Prairie Astronomer
c/o The Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc.
P.O. Box 80553
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First Class Mail

Next PAC Meeting
JUNE 25th, 1996

JUNE 96

Mr. Earl Moser 9/97
P. O. Box 162
Hickman NE 68372