

NSP IS UNDERWAY!

by Jason Stahl



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>
NEKAAL web page: <http://world.std.com/~wic/>

**NOVEMBER/DECEMBER
MEETING NOTICES:**

PAC MEETING
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 26th, 7:30 p.m.
at Hyde Memorial Observatory

NSP MEETING
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5th, 7:00 p.m.
at Mahoney State Park Lodge

PROJECT ATLAS 2
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8th, 12:00 p.m.
at Atlas Observing Site

DECEMBER PAC MEETING
at Hyde Memorial Observatory
Date and time to be announced

At the November meeting, Martin Gaskell is scheduled to present a program called "Getting the Best out of Observing Mars", just in time for the opening of the 1996-1997 Mars apparition. He will talk about things to follow telescopically on Mars.

BRIEFS:

My e-mail address is: murwille@genie.esu10.k12.ne.us
My web site URL is:
<http://genie.esu10.k12.ne.us/~murwille/7hills.htm>
- Mark Urwiller

Message forward by Jack Dunn from Susanne Harm:
I'm so pleased - after almost 2 years of attempts, finally - the Nebraska Public Radio Network has agreed to put StarDate back on the airwaves! Tell your friends and family to tune-in!
KUCV-FM - 90.9 6 a.m. Lincoln
KRNU-FM - 90.3 9 a.m. Lincoln
-Susanne Harm
Marketing Director, StarDate/Universo Productions,
University of Texas McDonald Observatory

Past NSPs have currently netted about \$2400 in the account. With that in mind NSP is going to try and bring in our first key note speaker expense free to them.

NSP is going to budget about a \$1000 to bring him/her here. The issue to have a banquet at the Pepper Mill Restaurant has been seriously discussed not to take place there. The idea to have a catered meal at the Valentine High School is currently the preferred option. We need to check with the school and the potential caterer to find out if this can be done.

NSP is going to negotiate with Jon Davenport to get a flat fee for use of the showers by the campers, so they do not need to pay the flat fee rather NSP will.

The brochures are being revised and should be mailed out by mid December of this year. If you have any suggestions or changes please give them to Dave Scherping at (402) 477-2596 or E-mail at scherpid.lincoln@squared.com

Jim Rippey of Omaha is going to conduct a brief written mail in survey of past NSP attendants to gather some feedback from outside resources to help make NSP4 a better star party. We should see the majority of the results of the survey by mid January.

Revised cabin reservations: you must pay two nights deposit within ten days of telling Tom Miller (402) 466-4170 or your cabin goes back up for sale.

A CALL FOR HELP. NSP is looking for creative resourceful people to work with canoe outfitters, or to come up with some great day/night time activities, or to work on T-shirts, or the Name that Object Contest. If you would like to work on any of these projects please contact Jason Stahl at (402) 423-4936 or E-mail at bgstahl@juno.com Your help is needed.

THE NEXT NSP MEETING IS DECEMBER 5TH AT MAHONEY STATE PARK at 7:00 p.m. Please attend if you have an interest in helping out with NSP4.

*Happy Holidays***contents:**

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MEETING ADJOURNED...

Secretary's Report by Bryan Schaaf



Four visitors attended the October 29th PAC meeting at Hyde Memorial Observatory. Dave Steinheider use to come out to Hyde as a telescope operator years ago and returned to become a club member. John Reinert was associated with the club while a teenager before Hyde was built and he also joined as a member at this meeting. Bob Kilbride attended and became a member too. Welcome Dave, John and Bob! Keith Strizek's girlfriend, Sarah, also attended.

There was brief discussion about "what's up" in the sky. Comet Hale-Bopp (now visible in the southwest sky shortly after sunset) being dimmer than predicted. The magnitude is still increasing, but just slower than expected, and it will be low in the evening twilight sky. The Leonid meteor shower peak is November 17th.

The December issue of *Sky & Telescope* magazine features a small column mention of last summer's Nebraska Star Party on page 103.

The November/December issue of *Air & Space* magazine features an article titled "Bless Our Happy Missile Silo" about the 20th Century Company, the same company that made the "option to buy" agreement for our site.

In site news, just two weeks after the outhouse was put back up, it blew down! A repeat Project Atlas is tentatively scheduled for December 8th at 12:00 noon. A final confirmation of the project date is expected at the November meeting according to Del Motycha, Rick Johnson and others. To get the job done "we need a lot of lag bolts and a rechargeable drill", Rick Johnson said.

Dave Scherping and John Bruce discussed the water line trench situation with the neighbor at the Atlas site. "He said he would put in a power pole on our land and run a line there for our use", Dave said, "and he would pay for it- what little [electricity] we use when we are there [at the site]". This agreement is in exchange for us allowing him to keep his water line where it is across our land, basically. A motion was made and carried to accept the power line offer provided that a specific written agreement is acquired in the near future.

The motion to "make available Atlas site keys to any active club members..." (page 2 of last month's newsletter) was tabled for the time being until we have a better idea of expenses and other methods to fund the cost of the liability insurance.

John Bruce gave his Treasurer's report verbally.

Doug Bell pointed out that the last Tuesday in December would fall on New Year's Eve, so we need to schedule the PAC meeting [traditionally the last Tuesday of each month] for another time. The December meeting day will be announced at the November 26th meeting.

The motion to "have a large poster with all the names of the members-

posted in a prominent place in the observatory...and a place for [Saturday night Hyde Observatory] volunteers to sign..." (page 2 of last month's newsletter) was amended to read "have a large poster with all the names of the volunteers posted in a prominent place in the observatory for everyone to see". The amended motion was made and carried.

I moved that "we have regularly scheduled board meetings to discuss club issues..." , but there wasn't much discussion about that. There wasn't even a second.

Jason Stahl volunteered to pick the days for the Mahoney Star Parties next year.

The last detail of the meeting was the continuation of nominations and elections of club officers. The results are:

President Doug Bell
Vice President Ron Veys
2nd Vice President (Program Chairman) Larry Hancock
Treasurer John Bruce
Secretary Liz Bergstrom

Looks like we have some fine officers for the next year.

There wasn't enough time left for a program.

This is my last Secretary's Report, but I will continue as editor of the *Prairie Astronomer* newsletter for the time being (Newsletter Editor was never part of the Secretary position). I'm sure that Liz will do a good job as our secretary and I wish her all the best as she adapts to her new position.

Dear Astronomical League Member,

The league is holding the 50th Anniversary (Golden) Convention at Copper Mountain, Colorado next July. This celebration, an international event, is open to all members of the league. The below information is current for October, 1996.

How are we celebrating ?

◆ We are reserving a Colorado Rocky Mountain convention equipped with major winter ski resort (Copper Mountain) to host the 1997 Astronomical League Convention. We are taking advantage of this facilities size and getting low off season rates for 6 to 12 days (June 27, 1997 through July 9, 1997). Rooms, condos and efficiencies with or without kitchens are available.

◆ We are assuring dark skies at 9,000 to 14,000 feet above sea level, 60 miles from any real light pollution with many observing sites. Magnitude 6.5 to 7.5 skies are common. Colorado has over 300 clear nights a year.

(Continued on page 5)

The *Prairie Astronomer* is published monthly by the Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc. 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: President Doug Bell (Lincoln) 489-8197, Vice President Ron Veys (Lincoln) 486-1449, Treasurer John Bruce (Lincoln) 483-0389. All newsletter comments and articles should be sent to: Bryan Schaaf, 1309 W. PLUM, LINCOLN, NE 68522 (or e-mail to schaafb@juno.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.

Observing Chairman's Report

by Douglas Bell



For December observing:

New Moon:	December 10th
Lunar object:	Christmas Eve full Moon
Planet:	Geminids
Messier monthly:	M 38
Top 40:	Trapezium
Deep sky:	The Rosette
Challenge:	How many stars in the trapezium?

Tip of the month:
If your optics are dry, put the caps on before you bring them in from the cold. Check them again after the scope has warmed up.

Lunar feature: Christmas Eve full Moon.
With luck (?) this Christmas Eve will find a beautiful full Moon rising over a soft bed of new fallen snow. Sounds pretty doesn't it? Take a minute to enjoy the crispness and silent beauty.

Planet of the month: Geminids
The Geminid meteor shower peaks at 17:00 (CST) on December 13th, just after the new Moon. I can't promise the weather, but I guarantee there won't be any mosquitoes.

Messier Monthly: M 38
An open cluster in Auriga; one of three messier clusters, all in a row.

Top 40: The Trapezium
In the heart of the Orion nebula is a brand new open cluster. The four brightest stars form a slightly skewed trapezoid. Tear yourself away from the nebula and do a little stellar observing.

Deep Sky: The Rosette
A very new open cluster still tangled in its nebula.

Challenge:
How many stars are there in the trapezium?
The trapezium has four obvious stars, and a whole lot more. See how many you can identify.

Astro trivia:
Who spoke the first words from the Moon, and what were they?

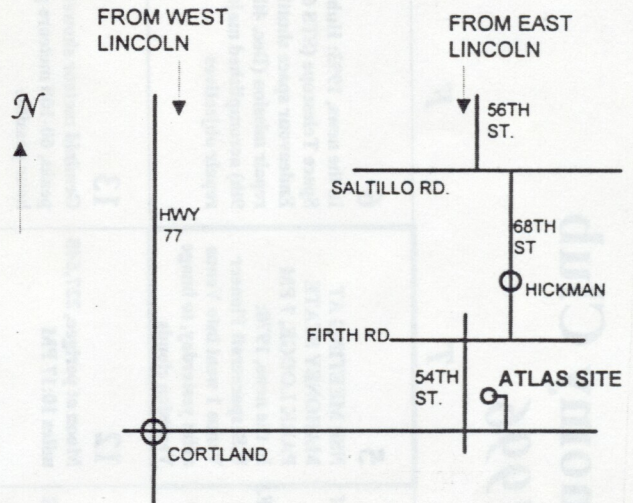
Last month's answer: The comet's name is correctly spelled "C/1996 B2". And you thought I meant "Hyakutake".

DIRECTIONS TO BEHLEN OBSERVATORY:
Behlen Observatory is located at the University of Nebraska Agricultural R&D Center, a few miles southeast of Mead, NE and is about 35 miles from either Omaha or Lincoln.

From Lincoln: Take Hwy. 77 north to about 1/2 mile past Swedeburg where you turn east on Hwy. 63. Follow Hwy. 63 east for about 7 miles until you reach 10th Street (Spur 78F) where there is a sign to Mead. Turn left and go 1 mile north to H Avenue. Turn right on H and go 2 miles to 8th Street. Turn left on 8th Street and go north 0.7 miles. The observatory will be on the left.

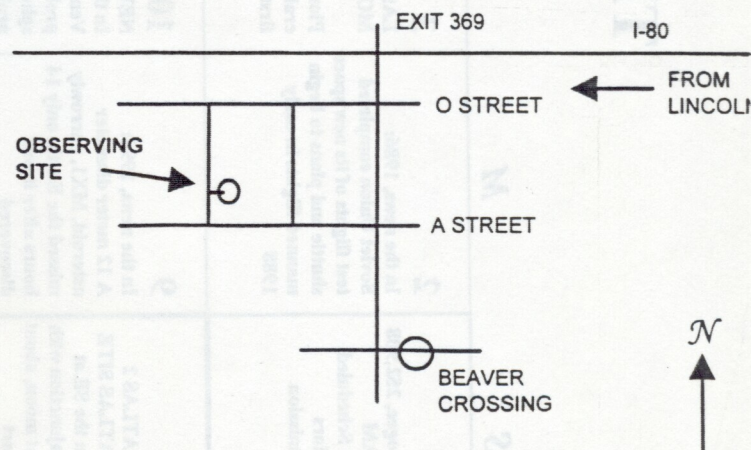
DIRECTIONS TO ATLAS SITE: From west Lincoln, take highway 77 south 16 miles to Cortland. Turn east on the road just south of the water tower. Go east 3.6 miles to the entrance road just east of 54th Street.

From east Lincoln, go south on 56th Street until it ends at Saltillo Road. Turn left and go east 1 mile to 68th Street. Turn right and head south on 68th, through Hickman, until the road ends. Turn right and go west 1 mile to 54th Street. Go south on 54th to the paved road. Turn left and go about 1/2 mile to the entrance road.



DIRECTIONS TO BEAVER CROSSING SITE: From Lincoln, head west on I-80. Get off on exit 369 and head south. Go south 1.5 miles to A Street. Turn right and head east 2 miles. Turn north; 2nd road to the right. Go 1/4 mile. The site is on the right side of the road.

An alternate route is to take O Street, rather than A Street and come in from the north as shown.



The Prairie Astronomy Club December 1996

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1 Moon at apogee, 252,908 miles 4:32 AM Tomorrow: Scheduled launch of Mars Pathfinder mission	2 In the news, 1986: Soviet Union completed test flights of its new space shuttle and plans to begin manned flights in early 1988	3 LAST QUARTER MOON 1:50 AM Pioneer 10, first spacecraft to fly past Jupiter, first close-up view, 1973	4 Moon within 5 degrees of Mars, morning Gemini 7 launched with F. Borman, J. Lovell aboard, to begin first manned rendezvous mission, 1965	5 NSP MEETING AT MAHONEY STATE PARK LODGE, 7 PM In the news, 1978: U.S. spacecraft Pioneer Venus 1 went into Venus orbit yesterday, to image Venusian clouds	6 In the news, 1993: Hubble Space Telescope (STS 61 Endeavour space shuttle) repair mission (Dec. 4th-9th) accomplished major repair objectives	7 Apollo 17 launched with Gene Cernan, Ron Evans, Harrison Schmitt aboard, 1972
8 PROJECT ATLAS 2 12 PM AT ATLAS SITE Venus low in the SE at dawn, in conjunction with thin crescent moon, about 1 degree apart	9 In the news, 1994: A 12 meter diameter asteroid, MX1, narrowly missed the Earth, only 14 hours after it was discovered	10 NEW MOON 10:56 PM In the news, 1978: Pioneer Venus 1 orbiter released 5 probes, gathered atmospheric data before probes crashed	11 Apollo 17 lunar module landed on the moon, 1972	12 Moon at perigee, 227,648 miles 10:17 PM	13 Geminiid meteor shower peaks, 60-100 meteors per hour possible	14 Mercury 7 degrees lower right of Jupiter, low over SW horizon this weekend through the 19th
15 Mercury greatest eastern elongation Gemini 6 launched with W. Schirra, T. Stafford aboard, to rendezvous with Gemini 7, 1965	16 Gemini 6 splashdown, 1965	17 FIRST QUARTER MOON 3:31 PM	18 Gemini 7 splashdown, space endurance record of 14 days aloft, 1965	19 Apollo 17 splashdown, last moon mission, 1972	20 Mercury 4-5 degrees lower right of Jupiter, low over SW horizon to the 23rd	21 Winter Solstice 8:06 AM First Day of Winter Apollo 8 launched with Frank Borman, Jim Lovell, Bill Anders aboard, 1968
22 Moon glides past Aldebaran, evening twilight Moon and Hyades cluster offer binocular view as darkness falls	23	24 FULL MOON 2:41 PM Venus 6 deg. N of Antares, morning Apollo 8 orbits the moon, first moon orbit mission, 1968	25 In the news, 1978: 4 days ago, Soviet Union spacecraft Venera 12 landed on Venus, transmitted data for 2 hours before it silenced	26	27 Apollo 8 splashdown, 1968	28 In the news, 1977: NASA rejected a White House request to study UFO sightings. It would be wasteful and probably unproductive.
29 Moon at apogee, 253,450 miles 11:27 AM In the news, 1985: Voyager 2 may have found dark areas; hints of weather on Uranus	30	31 NEW YEARS EVE. Because New Years Eve is the last Tuesday of this month the date and time for the December PAC meeting will be announced at the November 26th PAC meeting.	<p>Saturn (mag. 0.9) is the best positioned planet this month for evening viewing. Just south of the Great Square of Pegasus, it shines high in the south sky as darkness falls and remains visible for many hours. The rings are tilted slightly to our line-of-sight and telescopically the ball of the planet will cast a shadow on the ring system. Just 30 minutes after sunset Jupiter (mag. -1.9) will be shining low in the southwest sky, too low to see it well telescopically, however you can use it to find Mercury (mag. -0.1), which will be only 4 degrees to the lower right of Jupiter on Dec. 20th-23rd. Mars (mag. 1.0 on Dec. 1st) rises at about midnight in the first half of December and an hour earlier by the end. Rapidly moving from Leo into Virgo, it will brighten to 0.5 magnitude by month's end. Though Venus (mag. -4.0), like last month, is still very bright, it is quite low in the southeast sky at dawn and progressively lower throughout the month. Venus and a thin sliver of Moon will be in close conjunction the morning of Dec. 8th. Contrary to last month's calendar page, Comet Hale-Bopp seems to be less bright than anticipated, hanging around 5th magnitude or a little brighter. Astronomers will be waiting this month to see just how bright it will get as it descends into the glare of the Sun. By the middle of February the comet will appear in the morning sky continuing on it's way to perihelion on April 1st. when it <i>should</i> be a great comet. Let's hope so. <i>Clear Skies!</i></p>			

("Dear Astronomical League Member" continued from page 2)

◆ We are creating a summer vacation opportunity in a most beautiful place, 18 miles from Vail, 25 from Aspen, 10 from Breckenridge and 50 miles from the Rocky Mountain National Park in the center of the highest National Forest in the USA.

◆ We have invited the AAVSO, the Royal Astronomical Society, IOTA, the Dark Sky Association and many other national and international groups and they have confirmed our invitation.

What to do?

⇒ Tours of the second highest observatory (14,200 ft) in the world are available. Denver University's 28 inch I.R. binoculars (the Hubble is the only one higher) on Mount Evans, is 35 miles from Copper Mountain.

⇒ There are tours and viewing through the Denver University's Chamberlain Observatory's famous 20 inch Alvan Clark refractor and shows at Gates Planetarium in Denver.

⇒ Convention speakers, door prizes, raffles, auctions, astronomical display tables and night time demonstrations including many major astronomical equipment suppliers will be present.

⇒ JMI is bringing their 40 inch scope along with a 25 inch NGT for all five nights. Many other 20" and larger scopes will be there. S&S Optica, a Celestron dealer, will represent Celestron. Other major vendors are not yet committed to attend but have expressed strong interest.

⇒ Copper Mountain Resorts facilities and programs include golf at 9100 feet, complete gym and spa facilities, dining, cocktail lounges, hiking, wildlife viewing, ski lifts, nearby white water rafting, fishing, boating, July 4th fireworks and much more.

⇒ ATM awards (optical and mechanical) for prizes will be judged by the Denver Astronomical Society.

When and how much?

The official Convention dates are from July 1, 1997 to July 6 1997 with three days before and three days after for extended vacation at the negotiated rates. The Convention fee has not been set, but will be less than \$75 with 250 registrations and includes 3 meals (one convention breakfast, one barbecue dinner and a formal awards dinner). Final convention fees will be published by the end of May 1997.

The room rates are as follows:

Hotel room king or twin (1-2 people) \$ 79.00 per day (add 7.8% sales tax to rates), deluxe studio with kitchen (1-2 people) \$ 95.00 per day, 1 bedroom condo with sofa bed (up to four people) , \$105.00 per day, 2 bedroom condo with sofa bed (up to 6 people) \$170.00 per day, (shared room costs can be near \$30 per person)

When calling to register, tell them you are with the "Astronomical League Convention" (July 1-6, 1997). Voice: 1-800-458-8386 (ext. 1 and ext. 1 again) FAX: 1-970-968-2733 Mail: Copper Mountain Resort, PO Box 3001, Copper Mountain, CO 80433.

Low airline rates can be arranged through your local travel agent into Denver or Colorado Springs airports from US hub cities. Please begin those arrangements early to take advantage of airline discounts. Van

and Limo service is available. Parking is available, but no camping is permitted at Copper Mountain. Travel arrangements are up to you. If you have a local travel agency whom you trust, by all means use them, but we have informed a reputable travel agency here in Denver, Colorado who knows the turf. They are: Business and Leisure Travel Agency, 1775 Sherman Street, Denver CO 80203. Telephone 1-(800) 895-2805 Local Phone 1-(303) 830-8928 FAX 1-(303) 830-8938 They can arrange good airline rates from anywhere in the U.S. and transportation between the airports and Copper Mountain.

Keep tuned to The Reflector newsletter and the Internet DAS & Astronomical League page (<http://www.du.edu/~pryan/alcon97.html>) for updates.

Not sure you are a member of the Astronomical League? Check with your club. If not, you can join for \$25 at the ALCON.

Edmund G Kline
Chairmen for Raffles and Prizes
1997 Golden ALCON

PAC MEMBERSHIP LISTING CORRECTIONS FROM LAST MONTH

THE CORRECTED INFORMATION IS PRINTED IN BOLD>

Daniel	Deizell	dand@nebfc.com	Lincoln	NE	68516	llusk@navlx.net
Larry	Lusk	5531 Grouse Place				
Andrew	Stoddard	ars1@umgrad1.unl.edu				
Jason	Stahl	bgstahl@imecnebr.com & bgstahl@juno.com				
L. Lee	Thomas	lthomas@doane.edu & lthomas@navlx.net				
Mark	Urwiller	4711 Heather Lane	Kearney	NE	68847	murville@genie.esu10.k12.ne.us

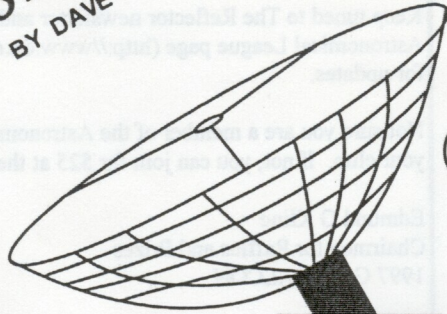
Note that all "itec.com" e-mail addresses for the entire membership list should be changed to "navlx.com" to reflect the changes that Aliant Communications are implementing soon, if not already.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

C.J.	Brown	Calif. Instit. of Technology, MSC 320	Pasadena	CA	91125	818-395-1088
Bob	Kilbride	brown@cco.caltech.edu				
		5415 High	Lincoln	NE	68506	402-489-7340
John	Reinert	P.O. Box 83251	Lincoln	NE	68501	402-432-9168
Dave	Steinheider	5901 Cross Creek Road	Lincoln	NE	68516	402-486-3633

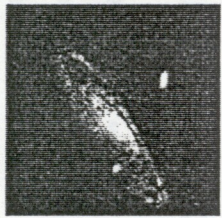
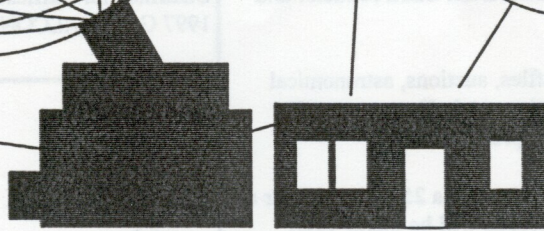
ASTROMAN
BY DAVE SCHERPING

RADIO ASTRONOMERS ON LUNCH BREAK

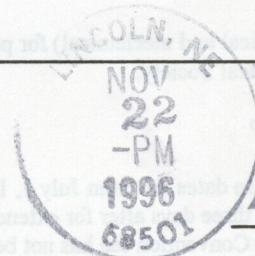


HEY JOE!
THERE'S A GREAT
MOVIE ON HBO.

WOW!
THIS THING GETS
GREAT RECEPTION!



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



First Class Mail

Next PAC Meeting
Nov. 26th, 1996

NOV 96

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