

The *Prairie Astronomer*

The Official Newsletter Of The Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc.

August 1997

Volume 38 Issue #8

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AUGUST & SEPTEMBER

MEETINGS & EVENTS

PAC MEETING

TUESDAY AUGUST 26, 1997, 7:30 PM
at Hyde Memorial Observatory

MAHONEY PUBLIC OBSERVING NIGHT

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 5, 1997
at Mahoney State Park - Soccer Field

PAC PICNIC

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 6, 1997, 5:30 pm
at Hyde Memorial Observatory w/ Observing at Earl Moser's

NSP-5 PLANNING MEETING

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 18, 1997, 7:30 pm
at Mahoney State Park lodge

PAC OBSERVING NIGHT

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 26, 1997
at Beaver Crossing Site (see page 7 for directions)

PAC MEETING

TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 30, 1997, 7:30 PM
at Hyde Memorial Observatory

Proposed PAC Bylaws Changes

As mentioned at the July PAC meeting, the NSP Organization Committee has concerns that NSP is not defined or mentioned in the PAC bylaws. Over the past 4 years, NSP has grown immensely. As NSP has grown, the duties of the treasurer have also grown along with his/her duties as PAC treasurer. Since it began, NSP money has been kept in a separate account from PAC money. No PAC money was used to start NSP. Also, NSP is now co-sponsored by OAS and the NSP committee includes several OAS members. We feel several things are needed in the PAC bylaws: 1) Definition of NSP and how it is organized and run, 2) Option for PAC treasurer to appoint an NSP treasurer, and 3) What happens to NSP money if NSP is discontinued. These proposed bylaws changes will be discussed at the August PAC meeting. - D. Scherping -

BEHLEN OBSERVATORY OPEN NIGHT

The Behlen Observatory Fall Open Night is scheduled for Friday October 3rd, at 8:00 PM. Once again Prairie Astronomy Club and the Omaha Astronomical Society are invited to help with this event. Last year, thanks to shirt-sleeve temperatures, 400 - 500 people showed up! This is a great time for the clubs to recruit new members. Consider bringing your telescope to set up outside the observatory no matter how modest your 'scope might be. The public will also be interested in seeing through binoculars and having constellations pointed out to them. Do you have a interesting computer display that could be set up inside for people to watch while they are standing in line? If so call Martin Gaskell (472-4788 office; 464-9664 home; e-mail gaskell@unlinfo). Let's hope the weather is as good as last year.

If you want to set up equipment, you can show up early around 7:30, but please make sure the public understands that the observatory opens at 8:00 and not 7:30.

SCOPE FOR SALE

Celestron C8+

Comes with a heavy duty tripod, 6x30 Finderscope, Star Diagonal - 1.25", Visual Back - 1.25" and a 26mm Multi-coated Plossl Eyepiece - 1.25" (78x). The scope is about 1 - 1 1/2 years old. The scope has only been used a few times. Asking \$975.00. Contact Jim Breeling @ (402) 289-3449 or via email at seerjim@aol.com.

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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 \$20/yr, Family \$22/yr. Address all new memberships, renewals, or questions to: The Prairie Astronomy Club, Inc., PO Box 80553, Lincoln, NE 68501. For other club information, contact one of the following: Doug Bell -President (402) 489-8197, Ron Veys - V.P. (402) 486-1449, John Bruce - Treasurer (402) 483-0389. All newsletter comments and articles should be sent to: Dave Scherping, 640 S. 30th St., Lincoln, NE 68510 (402) 477-2596 or e-mail dscherping@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, NE.

Observing Chairman's Report

For September 1997 observing

By Doug Bell

New Moon:	September 1, 1997
Lunar object:	The Harvest Moon illusion
Planet:	Venus
Messier monthly:	M 29
Top 40:	M 33
Deep Sky:	Veil
Challenge:	NGC 6791

Quote of the month:

I will indeed bless you, I will multiply your descendents as the stars of heaven?" Genesis 22.17

"Most city dwellers have never seen the Milky Way." IDA

Tip of the month:

Follow the sunset times in the paper each day. You'll be surprised how quickly they change.

Lunar feature: Harvest Moon

Most people are surprised at how small the Moon actually appears. This is especially true right now. Celestial mechanics and warm Autumn nights conspire to place a gigantic Full Moon on the horizon for what seems like an entire week. Perfect for cuddling on cool Fall evenings.

Planet of the month: Venus

Speaking of hovering on the horizon. Has anyone been asked about the UFO to the west? Yes, every time Venus appears there's a rash of UFO sightings. It seems that people are "just sure" that no astronomical object could be that bright.

Messier Monthly: M29

Now here's a sight. A "small, poor open cluster?". Wow, sounds like I should throw it a dog biscuit. But none the less it's "A Messier" and worth a look.

Top 40: M33

The great spiral in Triangulum. Barely visible naked eye in Valentine. But nearly impossible with even the slightest light pollution. Its very low surface brightness makes it react poorly to magnification and a tough in-town object. Don't expect anything like the pictures unless you've got a humongous scope.

Deep Sky: The Veil

A true showcase in dark skies. Also one of the easiest to find. Use an OIII filter to get the finest details. Use a wide field to see as much of the nebula as possible.

Challenge: NGC 6791

A faint but rich open cluster in Lyra. The book says 8 to 10 inches or it's just a smear.

Astro-Trivia:

Last month's answer: Actually, we can't measure the speed of light because no one can hold the ruler! Well?kind of. In fact, the length of the meter is defined by a certain wavelength of light. How many meters does light go in a second if a meter is determined by how far light goes in a second. It's a catch-22.

I'm the third brightest planet in the night sky but rarely seen with the naked eye! Who am I?

The PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB

PICNIC

SATURDAY

SEPTEMBER 6, 1997

5:30 PM AT

HYDE OBSERVATORY

BRING YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS

BRING FOOD (POTLUCK)

SOFT DRINKS WILL BE PROVIDED BY PAC

OBSERVING AFTERWARDS AT

EARL MOSER'S

Directions to Earl's: Take 70th Street south from Lincoln to Saltillo Rd. Turn right. Take Saltillo Rd west to 68th Street. Turn left. Take 68th Street south 5 miles to Hickman. Turn right at the flashing light (Casey's store). Go west 1 mile to 54th Street. Turn left. Go 1/2 mile to 3rd driveway on the left. Take the driveway to the top of the hill.

"CONTACT"- MOVIE REVIEW, by Bryan Schaaf

I recently saw the movie "Contact" starring Jody Foster and Matthew McConaughey. The movie is adapted from the science fiction novel of the same name, which I read and was written by the late Dr. Carl Sagan. Although the story is fiction, I found it to be an excellent "space movie". It seemed to portray radio astronomers and radio telescope terminology accurately. Portrayals of stars and star charts appeared authentic and I even noticed that there was a copy of "Sky Catalogue 2000.0" on a book shelf at the residence of astronomer Ellan Arway (played by Jody Foster); exactly like the copy I have at home. Best of all the movie was, in my opinion, based on "real science". There were numerous references to science concepts, like Einstein's "Theory of Relativity", for example. Although some viewers may not understand all the nuances of science in "Contact", it is entertaining. My dad saw it a day before I did and described it as "too far-out". My reply was "Why wouldn't it be? Afterall it is about contact of an advanced civilization..." I noticed one glaring untruth in the movie. A statement was made that American astronaut's have always been provided "suicide pills" in the event of a terminal emergency in space. You might notice others. Overall, I think the movie was very well done (and by the way, no foul language!). Nearly anyone that is familiar with astronomy and particularly the search for extra-terrestrial intelligence (SETI) will appreciate "Contact".

ASTRO - TRIVIA

Answers to last month's questions:

1. Which planet has the greatest mean density?
EARTH
2. Which planet has a moon named Oberon?
URANUS
3. What is the name of the group of asteroids which precedes and follows Jupiter in its orbit by approximately 60 degrees?
TROJANS
4. Who discovered Neptune in 1846?
JOHANN GALLE
5. In which constellation is the south celestial pole located?
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6. What is the 2nd brightest star in the sky (not counting Sun)?
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7. What is the popular name for the planetary nebula NGC7009 found in Aquarius?
THE SATURN NEBULA
8. What is the common name for β Ursa Majoris?
MERAK
9. In which constellation would you find the "Blue Snowball"?
ANDROMEDA
10. When did the supernova which created the Crab Nebula occur?
1054 AD
11. What is the color is the reflection portion of M20?
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12. Name for the most prominent pair of spectral emission lines visible to the eye in the light from most planetary nebulae?
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13. For what discovery did Albert Einstein win the Nobel prize?
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21. What are Thassaloids?
LUNAR BASINS (ON FAR SIDE OF MOON. LIKE MARES, BUT UNFILLED)
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23. What is the brightest Seyfert galaxy?
M77
24. Which planet has a moon named Amalthea?
JUPITER
25. What is another name for the Autumnal Equinox?
1ST POINT OF LIBRA

WHY ARE YOU IN THIS CLUB?

by David Knisely

Each amateur astronomer probably has differing reasons why he or she decided to join our club. Over the past 25 years, I have had the pleasure of meeting people who share at least a passing interest in our hobby, and I have made many good friends here. I have seen my role in the club change gradually over the years from a young nearly hapless novice, to an active "seasoned" member. I have seen the club change as well. I remember the early days when the club was small; when it first began to reach out to the general public with the Gateway skyshows in the 1960's and early 70's. I saw the realization of an "impossible" dream of one of our club mentors with the opening of Hyde Observatory. I watched the explosion of growth and activity in the club after Hyde's opening, as people in Lincoln were exposed to astronomy on a first-hand basis. Now, I have seen another "impossible" dream of a club member become an "explosion" of its own, in the last four wildly successful Nebraska Star Parties. It would seem that the Prairie Astronomy Club is an active and healthy organization which has accomplished a great deal.

However, I have now seen some things which are causing me some concern. We have nearly 100 members on the rolls, and yet it seems that attendance at meetings is not all that high. It seems to be harder to get people involved with things like putting on programs, helping with public nights at Hyde, or even getting out to observe. Even at the Nebraska Star Party, where the attendance record was smashed with 323 attendees, the smaller Omaha club had many more members there than did PAC. What does all this mean? So, I again ask, why are you in this club? The answer probably depends on exactly who you are and how long you have been involved with PAC. Are you a novice, unsure of your involvement in the hobby? If so, come to the meetings and ask questions, or just listen. Don't be too concerned about understanding it all right away, because amateur astronomy can be a complex hobby which takes a little time to get into. You will get it eventually. Also, come to the star parties. Yes, some of the equipment is big and expensive, but unlike some groups, our club has people willing to let you use their scopes at length. We also have our club scope available in case you don't yet have your own. Don't be afraid to participate in any of our activities. New blood is vital to any organization. Your input at club meetings may help shape the club into something which will serve your needs better in the long run, so speak up!

Are you a member who has been in for a little while? If so, you have gained experience which might be of value to others who are just starting out. You also have seen how the club has been run, and thus might have some useful insight in how it should be run in the future. Not everything you say may be instantly accepted by others, yet your presence and your input will have a lasting effect on the structure of the club in the long run. The hobby of Amateur Astronomy is vast in its scope, so there will still be things you may learn from others. Attend the meetings and the star parties, because there is still much to see and do. New objects, instruments, observing techniques, and people are often best found at many club events. If you have recently picked up a neat little piece of equipment, or have an interesting story to tell, you might consider doing a program at a club meeting (I doubt anyone would laugh at you, and you might be doing someone else a favor). You can also help the hobby of amateur astronomy in general by helping others in the community see and appreciate the wonders in the sky using public nights at Hyde Observatory. You may just reach a potential club member or even make just one more person aware of what things like light pollution can do to THEIR view of the night sky.

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NSP-4

a review by Dave Scherping

The 4th annual Nebraska Star Party was held August 2-9, 1997 at Merritt Reservoir in northwest Nebraska. The event, sponsored by PAC & OAS, attracted 330 participants from as far away as Brazil, Belgium, and Hawaii. NSP has been growing by leaps and bounds since its inception in 1993, particularly because of its dark skies and other recreational opportunities.

This year's weather was not as good as in the past. Those fortunate enough to arrive a day early enjoyed perfect skies on the night of Friday August 1. The transparency and seeing were as good as I've ever experienced, at least in a very long time. Saturday evening began with a brief thunderstorm, but the skies cleared off around 2:00 am.

Sunday night was a night set aside for observing with the general public. Lorri May of South Dakota, presented a constellation talk that was broadcast live over the Valentine, NE radio station. The skies remained partly cloudy throughout most of the night. I took the opportunity of the radio broadcast to let the world know that Dave Knisely, NSP Clear Skies Coordinator, had been officially relieved of his responsibilities. Unfortunately, the NSP staff appointed me to the position the next day. I hope that teaches me to keep my mouth shut! Sunday night also featured a 10 minute program about NSP on Nebraska Public Radio with interviews from NSP.

Following the early evening ice cream social, Monday night became totally cloudy and featured the first meeting of NSP Astronomers Anonymous, where several attendees admitted their addiction to astronomy as they suffered withdrawals from observing. Laser wars flared up shortly after twilight. Of course the newly appointed Clear Skies coordinator humbly took blame for the clouds.

Tuesday night started off cloudy, but around midnight the skies nearly totally cleared off and those fortunate enough to still be awake enjoyed the NSP skies once again.

Wednesday featured the NSP beach party and barbecue. Events included volleyball, horseshoes, kite flying, a sand wedge contest, a 3-legged race, and a water balloon slingshot contest. Being Clear Skies coordinator, I was naturally nominated to be the target for the water balloons. When the slingshooters could not connect, nearly 50 children took it upon themselves to ensure the clear skies coordinator was adequately baptized with water balloons, sand, and lake water. It must have worked, for that night was clear!

Thursday featured the annual canoe and tubing trip down the scenic Niobrara River. Nearly 200 attendees participated in the activity, which has over the past 4 years turned into a six hour long water fight. The Gehringer/Hamilton/Scherping aqua-commando force dug in deep on the first island and camouflaged by tall grasses, proceeded to hydro-assault more than 180 passersby with waterballoon slingshots and waterguns. Realizing Tom Miller was extremely well armed with newly acquired water cannons, "yours truly" attached himself to Tom's floating fortress following the breakup of the GHS team. The battles were mighty and the fighting fierce, but the Scherping/Miller team once again walked away wet but victorious.

Friday was a day filled with programs, door prizes, and vendors at the Valentine, NE high school. Vic Winter showed slides of comet Hale-Bopp. Bob Linderholm talked about his project of searching for asteroids. Brenda Culbertson gave a talk on binocular astronomy. Tom Gehringer shared his experiences in using the Mt. Wilson telescopes (remotely) with his astronomy students, and Rich Wilds gave a presentation on observing occultations. Vendors included Pocono Mountain Optics, AstroSystems, Star Master, Mag-1, and Astronomy-To-Go.

Thursday and Friday nights were clear but very windy, making use of large scopes difficult at best. Many astronomers enjoyed the opportunity to delve into binocular viewing. Several observers were amazed to find the Veil an easy target in 7x50 binoculars and it was even seen in 6x30's. It was a great example of how great the skies can be at NSP. Incidentally, Alan Skruggs of Amarillo, TX was appointed NSP "Wind Coordinator", a position he will carry into next year.

Overall, this year's Nebraska Star Party was a huge success. The fulfilled activities during the day more than compensated for the scarceness of clear skies. It was great to see old faces again and meet new friends. On a personal note, I was especially happy to find a lack of coyotes in the campground this year!

Special thanks go out to **Jason Stahl** for being this year's NSP Coordinator, to **Jim Rippey** for organizing the ice cream social & beach party & designing the t-shirt, to **Tom Miller** for handling pre-registrations and for bringing and sharing his boat, to John Bruce for handling treasurer's responsibilities & t-shirts, to Clark & Deb Cheney for handling door prizes, to **Bill O'Donnell** for putting together the NSP program booklet, to **Mark Dahmke** for maintaining the NSP web site, and to **Dave Hamilton** for helping with registrations and numerous other functions. Also thanks to all of our speakers and to the many other who helped make NSP-4 the best ever. An extra thanks to **Dave Hamilton** for volunteering to be coordinator of NSP-5.

Speaking of NSP-5, the first planning meeting was held at Mahoney State Park Lodge on Thursday August 14. The NSP organizing committee will meet on the 3rd Thursday of every month at 7:30 pm at Mahoney. Additional volunteer help is welcome and needed.



HERE'S A GOOD ONE....

Bill Gates to his broker:
"You spent my \$150 million on what ??? I said 'SNAPPLE' !!!"

Taken from the Toronto Globe - Submitted by Mark Dahmke

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FEEDBACK FROM NSP-4

E-Mail from Roger Welsch to NSP@4w.com

Dear friends--

I read about your great star party a week or so ago in the Lincoln paper and am really excited. When I camp, I never use a tent because the sky is the best cover, and the best times I have had with my daughter have been sleeping in the back of an open pick-up on top of the hill behind our house, watching meteor showers.

At any rate, 1) I would really like to be on your mailing list and 2) I would like to ask about your willingness to have a CBS crew join you one night next summer to report on your wild goings-on. (I'll have to check with my poor, beset cameraman about how he feels about shooting in the middle of the night!)

Roger Welsch, CBS Sunday Morning

IMPRESSIONS & OBSERVATIONS AT NSP-4

By Liz Bergstrom

Hot white heat & Brilliant sunshine. Nice dry air, not as humid as Lincoln, NE. Soft soothing clouds during the day. Fabulous black velvet crisp night sky for viewing. Brilliant Milky Way, so bright you can see your own shadow. A good start to the Perseid meteor shower. Lots of Oohs & Ahs. Stars so bright and close you can touch them. Exciting thunderheads, lightening, thunder rumbles & rain. Great hamburger party. Fantastic ice cream social, lots of good conversation. Terrific & knowledgeable vendors. Fun people. Interesting people. Lots of activities for family fun. Peace & quiet of early morning. Birds singing & trees sighing. Boats roaring on the lake. Marvelous tenting. Lots of telescopes, a few excellent binoculars. Green grass & blue water. Congratulations to the organizers & volunteers that make NSP a pleasure to attend. Sorry to leave NSP-4 so early. Waiting for NSP-5.

E-Mail from Richard Wilds to Dave Scherping

Hi Dave: I thought I would send a thank you along for the fine time at the NSP. You have a very friendly group. I can certainly see why your event has been growing. I hope that my contribution was of some value. I have also enclosed an updated list of HART's work on Jovian Mutual Events. Be aware that events 11 and 12 were reported as observed from the NSP. We have been leading the world in observations up to this time. I hope that trend continues, but with some good competition for the fun of it all. Thank You!

E-Mail from Martin Gaskell to NSP@4w.com

In case you missed it, there was a GREAT 10 minute feature on the current NSP, on "Nebraska Nightly" last night (Monday). I didn't quite catch all of it, but Dave Scherping and Jason Stahl sounded great. The economic advantages of the NSP to Cherry county were mentioned too. It was put together by Keith Ludden, who's work I'm very impressed with. I just took a look at the satellite picture and it looks like the NSP is socked in right now. The forecast seems to be for clouds and rain for a few days.

Martin

One Fine Star Party

I too would like to reflect the feelings of Robert Altman. I had a very enjoyable stay at NSP4 even w/ 2 nights of clear observing. The other nights were even sort of fun talking to very many interesting people from around the country. I think that I mostly enjoyed viewing through some really large aperture Dobsonians under the pristine skies there at Merritt. Back here in Raleigh, NC, I have had many opportunities to look through these same large optics but it just isn't the same (ie. light pollution is inevitable most anywhere you go out here). I was able to make acquaintances w/ Rick Singmaster (the owner/operator of Starmaster telescopes) as well as Vic Winter (who btw has a 16" Starmaster). To actually see DETAIL in an HII region w/in M33 absolutely blew me away (an obvious dark lane was spotted w/ Rick's 22"). And a side note, Vic now has me sold on a pop-up camper like his, in which I will be returning in for NSP5. It is a long trip but certainly worth it. If anyone has hesitated in going thus far, just do it. It is truly a memorable experience. Have a spouse who isn't into astronomy? That's ok I do too & she had a blast as there are many other things to do at the reservoir. Again, thank you for the wonderful opportunity and I will see you guys next year. Eric

E-Mail from Bob Cuberly to Doug Bell

Hi Doug, (and who ever you care to pass this on to--thanks), & cc to other well wishers and friends, who WILL be there next year with us. I trust everyone got home safely and are back in the old grind again--Oh well!! I wanted to thank you and all your coworkers and various co-conspirators, organizers, and friends again for the good time, all the info and help, and the outstanding event. I've already passed the word thru 4 states that we beat the crap out of the TSP for transparency, resolution, and overall observing as far as I am concerned. I had a blast, had enough sleep, and a taste of what good scoping is supposed to be about. I kayaked, canoed, got squirted, water blasted, saw great faint fuzzies, and the best damned (!!!!) detail I EVER saw on Jupiter, met neat, interesting, new people, drank very good home brewed beer, photon torpedoed, and generally had a good time. What else could a person want in a neat strange new experience(almost)? But don't shoot the weatherman yet--give him one more year to make good. I enjoyed the trip and will share some pictures soon. I expect you all might like to see some of them. (I do need the address for the Digital - man, too.) I learned in my search for black sky that there is none. When it gets that clear and transparent, it never gets dark---it just gets gray with more and more stars. AND my shadow. That my friend was a revelation to me. I shared the Swan, Lagoon, and Triffid with several others who also had never seen them that gorgeous--especially the Swan, with a 20mm Nag, OIII, at 100x. And the star clouds just went on and on, and deeper and deeper. My 35mm Pan in the starclouds was like a bottomless pit full of zillions of stars, it was hard to believe. Awesome! And, as usual, I never got the opportunity to look thru everything I would like to have, and I met people who impressed me and/or I liked whom I did not know who they were until too late to appreciate them or what they represented; The A-hole with "The Yard Scope" being the fly in the ointment. Nuff said. Even he could not ruin a great event. hanks again--See you all at Astrofest???? You'll take care, clear Skys, Bob Cuberly-

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Minutes From The July PAC Meeting

By Liz Bergstrom

The 29 July 1997 meeting of The Prairie Astronomy Club was called to order promptly at 7:30pm by president, Doug Bell. Doug brought up a trivia question. "What star did Dorothy Gale come from?" Hint: She is almost 60 years old. Doug said the answer will be given later in the meeting. Doug then asked if there were any guests in the audience. Our guests were Donald Gasparetti and Marta Boswell. Both have been to the observatory on the open public Saturday nights and decided to come to a meeting. Both Marta and Donald have paid their dues to become members. The club welcomed our guests.

WHAT'S UP:

On the observing list is the fact that all nine planets can be seen in one night. You can observe Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, Mercury, Uranus, Neptune, Pluto and Earth upon which you are standing. This can be done at NSP-4 during the next week. Doug also, mentioned that there are some double shadow events on Jupiter during September. However, we are not in the right position to see these events as they will occur during the day for our area.

SITE NEWS:

Doug mentioned that when some of the members went to the Atlas site [which has been sold to 20th Century Castles] to clean out the shed and move other various items belonging to the club, they found the shed to be locked. The club members were unable to get the wheel barrow, grill and other items which were stored in the shed. They did get the observing spools, picnic tables and other items which were outside on the grounds moved.

NSP NEWS:

There was an under current of excitement for those who were going to the best place in the state [starting Saturday 2 August 1997] to observe the heavens. Jason Stahl said that there were 321 pre-registered attendees and that more persons would be registering at the NSP location itself. A sample of the NSP-4 t-shirt with the printed logo and design was displayed. The NSP-4 t-shirts have been packaged along with registration material for those who pre-ordered them. They can be picked up at the registration desk at the Merritt Trading Post upon arrival. Jason listed several of the day activities that would take place. One especially for boating enthusiast was a sailboat regatta that would take place on Sunday, 3 August 1997 at the lake. Another event which would be taking place at the lake for those who are avid fishermen, will be the Walleye Convention. In order to take part in the walleye tournament it is a must to attend and register for this convention. There were several other events all taking place about the same time in the valentine area as our famous NSP-4 star party.

Jason brought up for consideration at our August meeting that there is a need to define NSP as each year the attendance is getting larger and the event more famous. Perhaps now is the time due to legalities to formalize, incorporate and to setup bylaws for NSP as an entity.

NEWS:

Doug brought up the CLUB PICNIC. This event is usually held sometime in late August or early September. The next new moon date is 1 September 1997 which is the Labor Day Holiday. Two dates were discussed.

- 1- The Saturday before the new moon date which is 23 August 1997.
- 2- The Saturday after new moon which is 6 September 1997. After **much** debate the date chosen was Saturday 6 September 1997. The picnic will be held at the Hyde Observatory location. Then those who want to observe will go to Earl Moser's place to observe.

Cliff Thornton and his wife Jean who live about 3 miles south and 3 miles east from Earl's place has offered an invitation for the club to use his nice long flat driveway as an observing site. Club members can contact Chris or his wife Jean at 402/792-2444 for directions and OK to use the the designated driveway.

OTHER NEWS:

Jack Dunn made mention at the death earlier in July 1997 of Gene Shoemaker [of Shoemaker-Levy comet fame which impacted Jupiter for all the world to see]. He and his wife were doing some research in Australia and had a car accident in which Gene was killed and Gene's wife severely injured. In honor of the part that Gene had in the discovery of the comet there may be a special memorial service at the meteor crater at Winslow, Arizona. Jack said there was not too much mention of this event in the news media.

Jack also, said that there is an art exhibit at Mueller Planetarium of fabulous paintings of the heavens and other outer space done by artist Joe Tuccioiron. Jack is making a slide show of these paintings. He brought a few of his slides to show the club. The paintings are magnificent and very realistic. Joe Tuccioiron makes his home in Cocoa Beach, Florida.

The Astrofest telescope makers party will take place 5 September to 7 September 1997 at Camp Shaw-Wah-Nas-See, near Kankakee, Illinois. It is sponsored by the Chicago Astronomical Society.

The answer to the Trivia question is the Kansas Star. It was the belief of the Munchkins and the good witch of the north that Dorothy came from a star called the Kansas Star.

DOOR PRIZES:

Tickets were passed out to the members and guests for the door prize drawing of three camera lens pouches contributed by Jerry Williams. President Doug Bell said that the pouches would make a great lens pouch for carrying eyepieces.

No further business was brought up for discussion therefore the meeting was moved and seconded for adjournment.

Jack Dunn presented a video program of events broadcast live on public TV channel 12 regarding the Pathfinder 4 mission to Mars. The National Science Foundation, Public TV and NASA are broadcasting the exploration done by the pathfinder robot as it performs its programmed duties. The Jet Propulsion Laboratory of Pasadena, California known as JPL did much of the research, robotics and programmings of the little Mars robot. Jack will be making a full length video program of the many events that led up to and including the Mars exploration scenes. The video will be used as part of a program for the public viewing nights at the Hyde Observatory. Jack you have the makings of a great program.

The PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER 1997

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5 Mahoney Public Star Party at Mahoney S.P. socccer field	6 PAC PICNIC at Hyde Obs. (see page 2)
7	8 1ST QUARTER MOON	9	10	11	12	13
14	15 FULL MOON	16	17	18 NSP-5 Planning Meeting 7:30 pm at Mahoney lodge	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26 PAC Observing at Beaver Crossing Site	27
28	29 3RD QUARTER MOON	30 PAC MEETING 7:30 pm Hyde Observatory !!!	Directions to Beaver Crossing Site: From Lincoln, take I-80 west to Exit 369. Go south 1½ miles. Turn right. Go west 2 miles. Turn right. Go north ¼ miles.			

ASTRO MAN

By Dave Scherping

THE FIRST MEETING OF ASTRONOMERS ANONYMOUS ONE CLOUDY NEW-MOON NIGHT

LET'S GET THE
"CLEAR SKIES
COORDINATOR"

LET'S START A
LASER WAR OR
SOMETHING!

HI, MY NAME IS BILL
AND I'M AN ASTRONOMER.
I HAVEN'T USED A SCOPE
IN 2 DAYS!

I'M CHECKING
MYSELF INTO
THE BETTY FORD
GALAXY CLINIC.

I'M NOT ADDICTED. I DON'T NEED MY SCOPE.
I ONLY USE USE IT SOCIALLY.

I'M GOING COLD
TURKEY. I GAVE AWAY
ALL OF MY SCOPES
AND BURNED MY
SKY & TELS.

YOU'RE IN DENIAL!

I THOUGHT MY LIFE
WAS FINE. THEN "BAM"...
CLOUDS ROLLED IN!

I'M HAVING SEVERE
NAGLER WITHDRAWLS.
SOMEONE SHOW ME
A STAR, QUICK!
I CAN'T TAKE IT
ANYMORE!
AHH-H-H-H!

I STARTED OUT WITH AN
OCCASIONAL PEEK THROUGH
BINOCULARS. THEN ONE DAY
AS I WAS SETTING UP MY
40" DOB, I SUDDENLY
REALIZED I WAS HOOKED!

- continued from page 3 -

Are you a "seasoned" member? If so, you have a choice to make. You have experienced much of what the hobby (and the club) has to offer, and you can either rest on your laurels and let your interest slowly wither and die like a candle going out, or you can light a new one by giving something back to the club. Be a mentor to those in the club who need help. Working with someone who is very new to the hobby will give you a chance to share in their excitement as they discover whole new worlds at the eyepiece. It will renew your outlook and will let you relive you own early days of exciting discovery. Attend the meetings regularly so you can be there for that new person who might need help. So many novices crash and burn when they first run into obstacles, and you might be just what they need to stay on track and in the hobby. You have a lot of experience with club matters, so how about serving as a committee chairperson, or running for club office?

Helping out at Hyde Observatory on a regular basis, writing newsletter articles, and helping with the planning for the next big star party are also very good ways to remain an active and involved club member. Please consider lighting your candle, so that others may see the wonder in our hobby.

You are needed. You are wanted. A club is only made from the input and efforts of its members. Please, get active in the club NOW!
(You are welcome!)

OFFICERS OF THE PRAIRIE ASTRONOMY CLUB

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VICE PRESIDENT:	Ron Veys (402) 486-1449
2nd VICE PRESIDENT (PROGRAM CHAIR):	Larry Hancock (402) 421-2827
SECRETARY:	Liz Bergstrom (402) 464-2038
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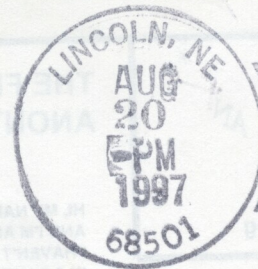
Please send all submissions for The Prairie Astronomer to:
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Another Quote Of The Month: "I can't believe I fit all of this stuff in this month's newsletter" DRS



**Next PAC Meeting
August 26, 1997
7:30 PM
Hyde Observatory**

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



First Class Mail

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8-97