



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE  
ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA - KINGSTON CENTRE  
AND THE  
QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY ASTRONOMY CLUB  
MID-MARCH 1978

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Greetings and clear skies for the season of the Vernal Equinox.

Another Fine Talk Heard By Our Centre

At our last meeting, on March 7th, the tradition of fine and interesting talks was continued with the presentation by David Levy. David's talk on "Observing Variable Stars", so well and thoroughly presented, came from someone who has had an obviously long and happy acquaintance with Variables.

Those who were new to the topic, as well as those who have had experience at least with the well-known examples, found it stimulating from beginning to end. There was a review of the basic types of variables with a concentration on the Semi-regulars and the Irregulars since those are most fascinating because of their unpredictability and because the observant amateur can genuinely contribute to knowledge with what he may have seen. David's knowledge of and fascination with stellar novae and supernovae came through when he told about these eruptive, cataclysmic objects which at various times have changed the appearance of the night sky. We were told of the naming system for Variable Stars, and were given practical advice and hints for how to go about observing.

As on previous occasions, I was impressed with David's knowledge of the important details in the history and development of Astronomy, and with the genial and sincere way in which they were presented.

Indeed, something will be grossly wrong if the interest of our centre in Variable Stars does not increase after this presentation.

"David, we hope to hear a lot more from you in the future!"

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A Missed Moon

Following the advice I gave in the last newsletter, I tried to observe a very young moon on Thursday, March 9th. Early in the day the sky looked promising but by late afternoon clouds were moving in. Nevertheless, I made my way to the summit of the hill I had chosen for my observations - a location which afforded an excellent view of the western horizon. From before sunset, which was about four minutes after 6:00 p.m. E.S.T., until well over an hour later I kept scanning the western sky - or at least the tiny portion of it which I could see. The sky by then was about 99% overcast, with that one

clear spot very low in the west near where I should find the slender moon. Thanks to having powerful binoculars I did see Venus shortly before seven o'clock - quite reddish and only a couple of degrees about the horizon but I missed seeing the moon, and the chance to say I had seen one less than twenty-two hours old.

The next night things were quite different. I was "onto the snowmobile and off to the hilltop", but observing conditions were almost the opposite. The sky was about 99% clear. Seeing was excellent. I spotted the moon with the naked eye a mere eight minutes after sunset and probably with more effort could have done so before that. A few minutes later, I saw Venus but, of course, they were much further apart than they had been the previous night when I had seen only one of them. I could not resist taking a large number of photographs both before the moon set and later in the night. In fact it was so clear that I believe I saw the Zodiacal Light more clearly than I had ever seen it before. As I observed the stars, I thought that if only the Aurora were to be seen, it would be a truly spectacular night with the Zodiacal Light and the Milky Way already so clearly visible.

I must console myself for not seeing a very young moon, with the fact that I did have an early sighting of Venus, even though for our centre, Enrico, who saw it about a week earlier, is the "Venus observer of the month".

How was your observing?

Next Meeting: Bring Equipment

Please don't forget the next meeting.

If you can, please bring binoculars and tripods, or small telescopes. We hope to set up some observing equipment outside Ellis Hall. That's Tuesday, March 21st at 8:00 p.m. E.S.T.

SEE YOU THERE!

