

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

Greetings for 1978! May you have the best observing year of your life! Let's hope we all have many more clear nights per week than we had in the first two weeks of the year.

I want to give a special "Thank you!" to all those who came to the last meetings. "Thanks" for venturing through the weather on December 20th, and for bringing slides and other items on January 10th.

O.K. RECEIVES A NAME

You read it first on these pages! (That is, if you read it first on these pages. Note slight joke!) In the second last issue a report was given of the discovery of a strange object between the orbits of Saturn and of Uranus an object that could be an asteroid, a comet, or an escaped satellite of an outer planet. This discovery was made by Charles Kowal of the Hale Observatories in California, the astronomer who discovered Leda, the thirteenth moon of Jupiter, and many deep sky objects, and for lack of a better name, the object was called merely 'O.K.', that is Object-Kowal, after the discoverer, of course.

By now a great deal of study has been done on the mysterious object and the object now has its own proper name; in fact, it is lucky enough to have two names. It is called Chiron, and pending identification as an asteroid it is also named 1977UB. The B would indicate it is "the second asteroid discovered" the U, that the discovery was made "in the second half of the month of October"; and of course the 1977 indicates the year of discovery. Although the comparator blink microscope was used to make the discovery and this was done on November 1st, the photographs were actually taken on October 18th and 19th with the 48-inch Schmidt telescope.

A thorough report on the subsequent study done on the object can be read in Sky and Telescope (January 1978 on pages 4 and 5). There its orbital period can be seen to be over 50 years and the other six elements of its orbit can be located.

A most interesting mathematical problem would be to determine whether given its present magnitude and orbital elements, it would be visible in the very large amateur telescopes at the time of its next perihelion passage. Given the large instruments which some amateurs now have, that may just be possible.

Whatever it really is, "Chiron-1977UB" is now a full-fledged member of our solar system.

A Night To Remember

As we all know so well, there have been very few good observing nights in the last month. However, the night of January 3 - 4 was one pleasant exception. In spite of intensely cold weather, there was little wind and the atmosphere seemed fairly calm in all directions.

I managed in the one night to do a great deal of astrophotography, to observe the aurora, and to see the Quadrantid meteor shower. The sky was a 'gem' for photographing constellations and planets. The Aurora Borealis with both a large arc and many rays was fairly intense and I tried to photograph it also.

The Quadrantid meteor shower was not an easy one to observe this year. The time of maximum came much earlier in the day and for this shower the number likely to be seen diminishes rapidly after the time of maximum. The radiant point, being far to the north on the celestial sphere - in the northern part of the constellation, Bootes, - was so placed on January 3rd at sunset as to be very close to the northern point of the horizon. I knew that unless one were far to the north on the earth's surface or far to the east of eastern Ontario, there was little chance of seeing a large number, but as the night wore on, I kept looking. Sometime around 1 a.m., I saw four meteors within a short period of time (perhaps five to eight minutes). Three of them were Quadrantids.

I have not yet heard of anyone else in the Centre who saw any Quadrantids or observed the aurora on January 3rd. By the way, January 10-11th (the night of our last meeting) was also a clear night and after midnight I did some astrophotography, also. A clear and cold night but not as eventful as January 3 - 4th!

Congratulations To Jack Newton

All members of the R.A.S.C. must be pleased to know that the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal has been presented to Jack Newton of the Toronto Centre. The medal was presented by the Governor-General and is a fine tribute to a great astrophotographer.

Two of Jack's outstanding photographs, those of a part of the Veil Nebula and of NGC-4565, an edge-on spiral galaxy, can be seen in the latest issue of Astronomy magazine (January 1978, page 45)

Congratulations, Jack!

Correspondence From Europe !

As I mentioned at the last meeting, I have had some correspondence with an amateur in West Germany. Martin Grossmann expressed interest in our contest, and would be glad to hear from people in our centre who have an interest in calculations pertaining to orbits, in the astro-calendar which he has devised, or in comets. For those who wish to write, here is the address: Martin Grossmann
Moellenweg 20
4432 Gronau
West Germany

If you wish a copy of his computerized astronomical calendar, tell him your precise longitude and latitude, time zone, and altitude.

On looking through Sky and Telescope I have been able to discover that Mr. Grossmann is a comet-photographer. One of the photographs he took of Comet West appears in the upper half of page 313 of the May, 1976 issue. It was such a fine photo that Sky and Telescope is now selling it as one of its large prints for \$15.00.

The Compendium Of Esoteric Facts - Column

After an absence of a couple of months this column makes its return with its fascinating fact for the fortnight.

DID YOU KNOW THAT ...?

Pipe-smoking is forbidden in the prime-focus observer's cage of the 200-inch Hale Telescope on Mount Palomar.?

It seems that once a smoking astronomer dropped his pipe but it missed the primary mirror. (Imagine! What if ... ?)

Reading List For The Month Of January

Don't forget the following:

1. The all-new Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Astronomy is an authoritative and excellent book and well worth looking at in your local library. You may discover you want to buy it. Its features include in-depth coverage and 650 photographs many of which are recent and superb. If a granter-of-wishes asks what you want for your next birthday present, this book should not be forgotten.
2. The January issue of Astronomy is the solar issue. Don't miss the article and pictures of the sun.
3. Sky and Telescope has photographs of the last solar eclipse and information about the latest meteorite find - a 35-pounder-in Alberta. (See page 19)
4. A California astronomer reports new discoveries concerning interstellar gas in the galaxy. Read about it in the article "The Structure of the Interstellar Medium" in the magazine, Scientific American (January 1978, page 74.)

ARE YOU INTERESTED ...

1. in helping in any way in the 'Scope Building Project' or assisting those who are working on it?
 2. in suggesting a name for this newsletter? It is almost time we had one. By the way, are you interested in helping by contributing?
 3. in a trip to the McLaughlin Planetarium? If the answer is "yes" to any of these, please write, phone, or tell me as soon as possible.
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MEETINGS ARE IMPORTANT

The dates of the next two meetings, of course, are:

January 24th and February 7th: Same time: 8:00 p.m. E.S.T.
Same place: Room 222, Ellis Hall

Come and bring a friend!

A NEW CONTEST!!

Giant Contest! Win! Prize! Contest! Win!
Enter! Fun! Participate! Be A Winner!
Giant Contest! Win!

We are pleased to announce another giant
Give-Away! A colossal Contest! A Chance
For Fun! Prizes! Prizes! Prizes! Prizes!
Remember our first one when Paul was the
winner and our second one when Doug was the
winner! Who will be next? Now! It could
be you!

THE FOGGY LENS CONTEST

Complete in 25 words or fewer the following
statement:

The last time I had my camera out for some
astrophotography, the lens became so fogged
up that _____

Name of entrant: _____

Address: _____

Contest Deadline: Noon U.T. on the Ides of
March, 1978. Bring your entry to the meeting
or mail to: Box 196, Sharbot Lake, Ontario
KOH 2P0
