

REGULUS
THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA - KINGSTON CENTRE
SEPTEMBER, 1979

NOTES ON THE I.A.U.

The Seventeenth General Assembly of the International Astronomical Union took place in Montreal last month and it was a most interesting gathering of astronomers from all parts of the world. Walking through the corridors of the Universite de Montreal was like being at the United Nations; name tags which listed the country, as well as the name of the astronomer, bore the words Russia, India, New Zealand, Portugal, and the list could go on and on.

The immediate impression for someone attending his first I.A.U. General Assembly was the recognition of the number of people and countries involved in astronomical research. With well over fifty different commissions now making up the I.A.U., and with a realization that new information in many areas has been coming in a literal flood, one starts to recognize the enormous amount of work that must have been done in planning and preparing the schedules. Dr. Batten, our former national president, and his staff had obviously done an excellent job. Trying to be host to between 2,100 and 2,200 people is a considerable undertaking.

The exhibits area was an interesting place where David and I spent some time talking with friends. The R.A.S.C. had its display with two pictures from our centre and information on the history of the Society. The Perkin-Elmer display had a model of the 94" Space Telescope, and even the model looked dazzling. There was also the model of the Canada-France-Hawaii telescope which has recently gone into operation. Jim Gall from Toronto has a fine display and Norm Sperling from Sky and Telescope was there with the kind of display which we hope he brings to future General Assemblies of the R.A.S.C.

I was fortunate to hear the public lecture given by Dr. Bohdan Paczynski from the Institute of Astronomy in Warsaw. It was on binary stars and included some very recent information. It is not often at a public lecture that one is treated to information that has been released to fellow professionals just one or two weeks before.

The I.A.U.'s General Assembly was a very interesting experience.

I want to conclude by paying tribute to our Honorary President, Dr. Douglas, who, I know, was there too and who extends her record for attendance by a Canadian.

"Dr. Douglas, I hope you get to many more assemblies and enjoy them all as much as I did this one".

For Your Compendium of Esoteric Facts

Here is another fact to add to your list. Remember to use it at the right moment at your next astronomical gathering.

Many astronomers use the Skalnate Pleso Atlas of the Heavens which was produced in Czechoslovakia by Antonin Becvar but they have no idea of the meaning of the words Skalnate Pleso and if they were asked would probably guess at some astronomical term.

Skalnate Pleso is actually a geographical term associated with the observatory where the atlas was produced, and it is translated "Rocky Lake", i.e. the "Rocky Lake Observatory".

Reports and Other Items

1. Unfortunately many of us had bad weather and were prevented from observing two outstanding events. Our plans to observe the lunar eclipse of September 6th were thwarted by the effects of Hurricane David (I think that was the one it was; there have been a few. Right?) Plans for seeing the lunar occultation of Aldebaran on September 12th also ran into cloudy weather. Two members of our centre did make a valiant effort to observe the eclipse. Denis and Mike camped out overnight on Sept. 5-6th on Wolfe Island in order to get a good view of western horizon and the chance for several minutes of totality. Then came the cloud and the rain. Such is the luck. It was a bit easier for David from his new setting under the clear skies of southern Arizona. I understand he watched the event for five hours including all of the total phase. He reports that the moon was quite dark (Was that a 1 on the Danjon eclipse luminosity scale?). We hope to have his photographs of the event and to show them at a future meeting. On the evening of Sept. 11th the waning moon and Aldebaran were an interesting configuration in the sky and I took a number of photographs. With the coming of morning and the approach of the occultation, the clouds came along also. Such is the luck.
2. Pun of the month: Remember the story of David's Talking Telescope. David reports taking out the tape recorder and replacing it with a radio. He says he now has a radio telescope. (!)
3. In the latter part of the summer of 1978, I saw and reported on several auroral displays, one of them being of a strange, very unusual variety. Again this year, but slightly earlier I saw a strange aurora. It was the evening of Monday, August 20th between 10:00 and 11:00 p.m. and it was a "band-type" of aurora which went up from the northwest, crossed the Milky Way near the zenith and extended some distance beyond it. The band broke up into small bars in an unusual sort of way. It was a remarkable display. I would be very interested to know if anyone else saw it. There was also an aurora on the night of Saturday, August 25th, but not as strange as the previously mentioned one.
4. We welcome Angelika as president of our centre and wish her well in the coming months.
5. Another comet has been discovered by (guess who.) Bradfield of Australia using his 6" refractor. Is this his eighth? Details are in the September issue of Sky and Telescope.

6. David reports that he has already toured the VLA (in New Mexico) and the MMT (the six-mirror telescope of Mount Hopkins Observatory in Arizona) and has attended his first meeting of the astronomical group in Tucson. He has also been asked to lend his Gregorian telescope for display at the Planetarium. All that within a very few short weeks!
7. Did you hear what the customs official said when a van crossed the border carrying thirty-eight (more or less) telescopes and heading for Tucson, Arizona? Ask David for the answer to that one.
8. Coming soon, on these pages -- another contest! That's right. Look for it next month. Plan to enter. You may be a winner.
9. Dues are due! That time of year is rolling around, when annual membership fees are due. That means \$16.00 or \$10.00 for those under 18 years of age. Please see Enrico as soon as possible. Do not wait to be approached by him; help make his job as easy as possible.
10. Did you notice that this issue was shorter and later than other recent issues. I hope that that is a reminder that your editor would like to receive contributions. Please contribute to your newsletter.

Clear skies and good observing!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Leo", with a horizontal line underneath.