

REGULUS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE

ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA - KINGSTON CENTRE

OCTOBER, 1979

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A Second "Canadian" Comet

Last year, in our May issue we reported the discovery of Comet Meier (1978-f). It was a surprise and a delight to learn that on April 26th Rolf Meier, a member of the Ottawa Centre, had become the first Canadian to discover and receive credit for finding a comet. In appreciation for his efforts, the R.A.S.C. presented Rolf with its outstanding award, the chant Medal.

Again this year it is a pleasure to learn that Rolf has discovered a second comet. The discovery of Comet Meier (1979-i) was made on September 19th when Rolf detected a fuzzy object of 12th magnitude in the constellation, Draco. Once again the discovery was made with what is becoming a historic instrument -- the Ottawa Centre's I.R.O.-16 -- the Indian River Observatory's 16" telescope which is located at the observatory near Almonte. Rolf had spent about thirty hours in comet searching in the seventeen months since the previous discovery and his efforts were amply rewarded when the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory confirmed the discovery. Soon after observers at the Lowell Observatory and Harvard College Observatory also saw the object.

Once again we say 'Congratulations, Rolf' this time for the discovery of the ninth comet of 1979.

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The Unnatural Laws Of Astrophotography

Some members of our centre may recall that about a year ago, in September 1978, to be exact, I published what were called the Unnatural Laws of Summertime Observing -- seventeen laws in all and almost all of them concerning mosquitoes and their infestation of observing sites. It had been a very bad year for mosquitoes. Rather than add to the list of such laws - something that could easily have been done after a summer such as this one was, with its mosquitoes I wish to pass on to the Laws of Astrophotography, some of which, no doubt, many astrophotographers will have discovered or experienced though they may never have expressed them in this scientific (!) way.

Here then in the tradition of Murphy's Law, Allan's Axiom and Etoffe's Observation are the Laws of Astrophotography:

- Law
1. The rare or unique Aurora will always occur when you are on a camping trip with Kodachrome 25 in your camera, Ektachrome 400 in the refrigerator at home, and your tripod five miles away at a friend's place.
  2. The best picture by far on the whole roll is the one on the very last frame--the one the lab used for identification of the roll.
  3. The second best picture is always the one the lab scratched.
  4. The other pictures which you thought were of good quality fall into at least one of the following categories -
    - (a) pieces of emulsion torn off,
    - (b) cut in the wrong place,
    - (c) fingerprinted badly on both sides.

5. Category (b) above results in one frame showing a twenty second exposure combined with a ten minute exposure.
6. If you use the mail, the post office loses twenty-one percent of your film.
7. The lab loses twenty-two percent of your film.
8. The picture that won you the prize will be scratched when you have a print made of it.
9. Your brother-in-law will find a way to do at least two of the following:
  - (a) poke a finger into your lens,
  - (b) trip on the cord when the clock-drive is plugged in,
  - (c) press the stop button on the stopwatch when you are timing an exposure,
  - (d) ask the brilliant and searing question: "Whatja takin' a pickjur of that stuff fer?"
10. During your slide show presentation to the club, the projector bulb fails 35% of the time, if no one has an extra bulb.

I have limited the laws to ten in number for the moment, but hope to publish more at a later date.

If over a period of involvement with astrophotography you have discovered some unfailing laws and wish to share them for the benefit of fellow amateurs, please write and tell me. State the law succinctly, precisely, and of course, mathematically, and tell me the conditions under which you discovered it.

Just in case you have not heard what are the the three referred to above, here they are:

Murphy's Law: Anything that can go wrong will.

Allan's Axion: If all else fails, read the directions.

Etoffe's Observation: The other line moves faster.

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#### For Your Compendium of Esoteric Facts

Here is another fact to add to your list. Hasten to use it at the appropriate moment at the next gathering of astronomers which you attend.

Edwin Hubble who was one of the greatest astronomers of the modern world was also one of the finest athletes of his day. At college he was a track star, a basketball star, and such a skilled boxer that he fought a match with the world light heavyweight champion. In fact, boxing promoters tried to get him to become a professional boxer; they were convinced he would be world champion.

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#### The Family Grows

The number of telescopes in David's collection has recently risen to an amazing forty. (Yes--four, zero--40) with his acquisition of two very important instruments.

One is an amazing 6" Maksutov, a homemade instrument, made and used by the founder of the AdAstra Corporation. This 6", f-23 instrument can be used for astrophotography and is a real gem.

The other is a 12" Cassegrain system, made in 1918 and bearing the Tinsley name. This was the public instrument that was used on Mount Wilson for forty years, during the time when the 100" was the world's largest. It is obviously of considerable historical importance.

We congratulate David on gaining possession of these fine instruments. The family grows and grows.

Reports and Other Items

1. We congratulate Terence Dickinson on being made the editor of Star and Sky. It is an excellent publication, has been getting better and better, and holds great promise for the future. It is good to see a Canadian as editor of a major astronomical periodical. "Best of luck, Terry!"

2. As a reminder to you of the dates of our meetings during the coming months, please copy or record on your calendars the following list:

Nov. 1	Mar. 6
Nov. 15	Mar. 20
Nov. 29	Apr. 3
Dec. 13	Apr. 17
Jan. 10	May 1
Jan. 24	May 15
Feb. 7	May 29
Feb. 21	June 12
	June 25

3. We had a very interesting Club's Night at Queen's University on October 3rd. We had a chance to talk to a good number of students, to explore their interest in astronomy and it is hoped that we will have some of them as regular members of our centre. It was certainly good to see several of them at the meeting the following night. I hope they enjoyed the slides, and hope that they and others join our group on October 18th and in the coming months.

4. It is a pleasure to report that Warren Morrison of Peterborough is now a member of our Kingston Centre. Warren is known to us as the discoverer of the nova which appeared in Cygnus a year ago, and David and I had a chance to meet him at the G.A. last May in London, where he received a major award of the Society.

"Welcome to the Kingston Centre, Warren! We are thrilled to have you as a part of our group."

5. Welcome, also, to John Hansen of Amherstview who has joined the Kingston Centre.

6. Here is a reminder about some observations that are worth planning for in the coming month:

(a) Meteor showers include: the Orionids (Oct. 21), which because of the proximity of new moon may be the outstanding shower of the year; the Taurids which reach their maximum on Nov. 4th; the Andromedids which do likewise on Nov. 14th; and finally the Leonids of Nov. 17th and 18th which are best observed in the very early morning because of the time of the radiant's rising.

(b) The disappearance of Saturn's rings is worth observing late this month and early next month. The time of the earth's passage through the plane of the rings is given as 3hr U.T. on Oct. 27th but, depending on the instrument used they may be undetected for several days or even weeks.

(c) Try to be the first one to detect Venus this fall as it moves into the Western Sky and becomes an evening star. Depending on your view of the Western horizon, you may be able to spot it sometime around the end of this month or shortly after.

(d) Try to observe, if possible, and perhaps even photograph, the lunar occultation of Aldebaran about one hour after midnight on the night of Nov. 5th-6th. If the weather is good this should be a good occultation even for beginners to observe and time, though the moon being near the full phase should be still very bright. Let's hope that the weather is better than it was for our observations of the Sept. 12th occultation.

(e) The close conjunction of two bright planets and a bright star should make for spectacular observing low in the western sky just after sunset in early November. Mercury at magnitude 0.5 is just slightly over two degrees south of Venus at magnitude -3.3. on Nov. 8th and both planets are close to the star Antares.

(f) At mid-month the path of the moon through the constellation Leo will be worth observing in the early morning. It will pass Mars, Regulus, Jupiter, and Saturn, and with some luck the astrophotographer may be able to get some good photographs of conjunctions between Nov. 12th and Nov. 15th.

7. Here is another reminder about your dues. Annual membership fees are now due. If you have not already taken care of this matter, please see Enrico as soon as possible.

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A New Contest

CONTEST! CONTEST!

WIN! WIN!

Remember the unforgettable mosquito contest! Recall, if you will, the cold night contest! How could you forget the foggy lens contest?! Here it is, again and at last, another contest. . . . It is a chance to write and appear in print and perhaps win a prize. Enter early and enter often. Paul was our winner in the first contest; Doug, in the second; and Enrico won in the last one.

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The Annoying Light Contest

Did you once buy your first telescope, only to discover the first time you used it that your neighbour had just installed more powerful outdoor lighting? Did you later acquire another and more prized telescope, only to discover that aforesaid neighbour planned to install the next day a high-intensity spotlight? Years later when you had cultivated a friendship with the party of the second part, and he had agreed to turn out the light for a whole hour one night a week, did he suddenly move away, only to be replaced by a fellow who brought the wonders of mercury vapour to his back yard for the first time? Now is the time to release your frustrations; spill it out; tell us about it; and perhaps win a prize in the process.

Complete in 50 words or fewer the following statement:

The last time I set up my telescope for observing, the neighbour's lights were so annoying that \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
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Name of Entrant: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Contest deadline is 0:00 <sup>hr</sup>U.T. Nov. 30, 1979. Clip out your entry and bring it to a meeting on or before Nov. 29th or mail it to Box 196, Sharbot Lake, Ont. K0H 2P0