

R E G U L U S
THE NEWSLETTER OF THE
ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA - KINGSTON CENTRE
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NEWS FLASH - A THIRD COMET FOR ROLF MEIER

It is a very genuine pleasure to report that Rolf Meier, an avid observer and active member of the Ottawa Centre of the R.A.S.C., has just made his third comet discovery. Rolf's many hours of searching have been rewarded an amazing three times in approximately two and a half years -- amazing, indeed, because of the numerous cloudy, rainy, and very unsuitable nights we have had in the past few months. What a suitable tribute to Rolf's dedication and skill at the eyepiece of the I.R.O.-16" telescope!

It is becoming a habit. Our May, 1978 newsletter reported the discovery of Comet Meter (1978-f), and in our October, 1979 issue we reported on the second Comet Meier (1979-i). Let's hope this habit continues for a long time. The present preliminary information which I have on the latest Comet Meier may help someone to find it. I understand that it is at about 10th magnitude and moving in a south-south westerly direction. It is currently in the north-eastern part of the constellation Hercules, its position for November 6th given as Right Ascension: 18^{hr} 6.2^m, Declination: +42° 9', and for November 9th given as R.A.: 18^{hr} 3.5^m Dec.: +40° 22'.

Again we say, "Congratulations, Rolf!" for the discovery of a third comet. "Put another notch on the telescope!"

LATEST REPORT FROM THE TUCSON BRANCH OF THE KINGSTON CENTRE

(Editor's Note: Again this month, I am very pleased to have received a report from David Levy in the astronomical capital of the world. I am sure that a good many of us are envious of David and Rik, two of our members who live under the Arizona skies that I understand have been very clear lately, and especially envious of them when there is rain and snow and fog and sleet and other such things as we have been experiencing lately.

A short while before writing these words, I was talking on the telephone to David and he was about to go up to the observatory for a night of observing. How many of us would not be thrilled at the chance to do that sort of thing regularly?).

In a very important sense 1980 has been an unfortunate year for astronomers--sad because we have lost two outstanding men who have left their mark in very different ways. I'll never forget that late night telephone call from Terry Dickinson, with the news that Leslie Peltier was gone. I felt that amateur astronomy had lost part of its spirit.

A few months later, I received a letter from Joe Ashbrook of Sky & Telescope, who wanted to comment on the job I had done on my Masters Thesis. He knew about the work I was doing because when I needed some urgent assistance he was there and he came through. In fact, without his special insights on what might have happened to a little comet in 1864, I may have had no thesis. But a few days later, he too was dead.

I owe my original interest in variable stars almost entirely to Les Peltier. A few chapters of Starlight Nights, read in 1966, were enough to get me started on my variable star program, and the letters of encouragement, coupled with two memorable personal visits to Delphos, helped to keep that interest alive and growing.

Although I write only for myself, I know that there are others who feel the same way about both these people. Perhaps, it is my personal acquaintance with these two unassuming and considerate men, both of whom were infected with an all-consuming devotion to the universe, that gives me such an overpowering sense of loss. Les and Joe are irreplaceable. We can try to emulate them, but I fear that the mold out of which they were made has been tossed aside.

LATE AGAIN!

Those who publish and edit periodical literature are well aware of the deadlines they have to meet and the constant rush that seems to exist in an effort to get the publication into the hands of the reader on time. Usually everything comes together at the last moment and the publication rolls out and is on its way to the waiting readership.

If everything goes well the publication is soon in the hands of the eager subscriber. If he is an amateur astronomer reading his latest "special interest" publication that subscriber may be a person who can read about a newly discovered comet or a distant supernova and he may be able to observe it before it fades away beyond the power of his telescope to grasp or, if a comet, before it moves into a part of the sky not seen from his latitude. From the publication's latest issue, our subscriber may plan his next month's observations of such things as occultations. In other words, the amateur astronomer has a stake in receiving his publications and receiving them in time for their being useful to him and his observing program. Even if he does not use them as a guide for any of his specific observing programs, and even if he does not observe at all but reads only theoretical articles and aspires to being an armchair astronomer, he still has the right to expect his periodical literature to be delivered to him in a reasonably good condition and within a reasonable period of time.

Recently I have heard a good many complaints about the delivery of astronomical periodicals. Editors and publishers work very hard to see that the current issue is produced according to a definite schedule and then it seems that solely because of the delivery process, far too many readers are left disappointed or angry because the publication arrived far later than it should have. The mail systems of two countries, computerized or non-computerized, efficient or inefficient, fast or slow, seem to have been doing something which produces a weird and bizarre system of delivery. Bear with me as I present an example or two. During the current month of November, I have received only one of the "Big Three" Astronomical periodicals. It came on November fifth, which is quite early. (Good delivery!) If everything runs true to form, I may expect to see the other two members of the "Big Three" at any time now, during the next month and a half. The second example is from several months ago I received one issue of one of the "Big Three" precisely one day after I received the next month's issue of the same magazine. (Does anyone know where that one magazine was for 32 days?) My third example (if the gentle reader will bear with me) concerns my delivery of all three issues of the "Big Three" for the month of October. One of them arrived on October 28th and two of them appeared on October 29th. All of the "Big Three" have mailing policies. One of them, whose policy is announced and well-known, should have been mailed precisely 39 days before I received it on October 29th. That's not exactly lightning-swift delivery. Even though we do not expect the delivery priority for magazines to be what it is for letters, it might be well to recall that there was a time when it was stated that items mailed before a certain hour of one day would be at the city destination, anywhere in the country, the following day. Readers of periodicals do not expect that kind of rapid service; on the other hand, they do not expect that it should take 39 days for delivery.

Many readers of astronomical periodicals are quite concerned about erratic delivery of their favorite reading material. Whether they will be able to do anything about it remains to be seen. However, in an age of supersonic travel and "instant information", erratic (delivery) mail patterns remain a sad fact of life. Such should not be the case.

FOR YOUR COMPENDIUM OF ESOTERIC FACTS

Did you know that Mars has a volcano whose walls are almost 80,000 feet high? There has been some speculation that an even larger volcano may exist on Venus. Compare the height of that Martian volcano with any on earth, or even compare it with the highest mountain on earth--Everest which is about 29,000 feet high.

REPORTS OTHER ITEMS

1. I saw a number of members of the Taurid meteor shower on the night, of November 5th at about the time of the shower's maximum. The meteors were short and fast. I would be interested in hearing from others who might have seen them.
2. In the next few days our knowledge of Saturn should grow and change dramatically because of the approach of Voyager I to the ringed planet. Be prepared for a lot of surprises.
3. We were very pleased to receive correspondence from Mr. Gus Johnson of Swanton, Maryland, the discoverer, on April 18th, 1979, of the supernova in M100 (see Regulus, May 1979.) Mr. Johnson is a member of the R.A.S.C. and has requested joining our centre. We would be more than thrilled to have him as a member and would be thoroughly delighted if he could visit Kingston sometime in the future.
4. The A.A.V.S.O. held a successful meeting in Cambridge, Mass. at the end of October. The Number One Variable Observer for the past year was our own David Levy, who had amassed a grand total of 10,892 observations. Congratulations to David! It is another very significant achievement! "Did we not say all along that you would have more than 10,000 observations?"
The list of top variable observers includes several other Canadians. I understand that second on the list of observations reported was Bernard Bois of Quebec. Also in the top eight were Chris Spratt of the Victoria Centre and Steven Sharpe of the London Centre. With four out of the top eight observers being Canadians, it seems that we can certainly feel that some members of our society are doing their share of variable observing.
5. Here are several notable things to look for in the coming weeks:
 - (1) the Geminid meteor shower, peaking on the night of December 13th-14th. The moon, nearly at first quarter, sets about midnight.
 - (2) the Ursid meteor shower; although with the moon just past full at the time of the shower's peak, it may be difficult to see all except the brightest of them.
 - (3) the Aldebaran occultation (or near graze) on the night of December 19th-20th.
 - (4) the configuration of the Moon and the planets, Jupiter, Saturn, Mercury, and Venus in the early morning sky during the first few days of the month of December.
6. We look forward to some interesting meetings in the coming weeks:
 - (1) On November 13th we hope to hear Dr. Covington speak to us on some of his experiences in radio astronomy.
 - (2) Our Annual Meeting to elect officers for the coming year will be on November 27th.
 - (3) On December 11th, Andrew Ager will give the first of several talks he has prepared on NASA and its work in space exploration. We look forward to this and to his future presentations in January or February.

On the matter of meetings, some thought has been given to changing our meeting nights to Friday. No decision has yet been made. If you have any opinion on the matter, please come to these meetings and make your views known.
Remember our meeting place is Ellis Hall, Room 222. The time is 8:00 p.m.
Please attend and bring a friend.

CLEAR SKIES AND GOOD OBSERVING!

Leo Enright.