



# REGULUS

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1994

NEWSLETTER OF THE KINGSTON CENTRE  
OF THE ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA

## MEETINGS AND EVENTS HORIZON

**Regular Meetings** of the Kingston Centre, RASC, are held on the **second Friday** of each month (unless noted otherwise) at **8 p.m.**, in **Room B-201, Mackintosh-Corry Hall, Queen's University**. **Non-members are welcome.** Executive Council Meetings are at 7 p.m.

**Thurs., Nov. 3**      **SPECIAL MEETING—IN GOODWIN HALL, ROOM 254. Speaker, Doug Hube, National President: "The Lunar Grazing Occultation Expedition of the Edmonton Centre to Fort Nelson, B.C."**

**Fri., Nov. 11**      **REGULAR MEETING. Speaker, Dr. Richard Henrikson, Queen's University. Topic TBA.**

**Fri., Dec. 9**      **REGULAR MEETING. Speaker, Dieter Bruekner, "Modelling Creation: An Experiential Perspective."**

### OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

**HONORARY PRESIDENT:** David Levy, (000) 000-0000  
**PAST-PRESIDENT:** Christine Kulyk, (000) 000-0000  
**PRESIDENT:** Walter MacDonald, (000) 000-0000  
**VICE PRESIDENT:** Leo Enright, (000) 000-0000  
**SECRETARY:** Ruth Hicks, (000) 000-0000  
**TREASURER:** Kim Hay, (000) 000-0000  
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**NATIONAL COUNCIL**  
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**ALTERNATE REP:** Kevin Kell, (000) 000-0000

### COMMITTEES

**EDUCATION:** Denise Sabatini, (000) 000-0000  
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**ADVERTISING:** Classified advertisements re items to buy, sell, or trade, are free to members of the Centre. Commercial advertising is \$25 per half page, \$50 for full page. Commercial advertisers must provide clean, camera-ready copy.

**CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME:** Articles, notes on observations, humour, poetry, artwork, anything on astronomy or related topics, are invited. Submitted material may be edited for brevity or clarity. Contributions should be sent to the **Editor** as follows:

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**NINE-TEEN NINETY FOUR WAS A GREAT YEAR FOR ASTRONOMY. HERE'S WISHING EVERYONE SUCCESS, JOY, HAPPINESS, AND CONTINUED OBSERVING PLEASURE IN THE YEAR AHEAD. HAPPY 1995!**

## REPORT OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING

OCTOBER 29, 1994

**By Cathy Hall**

The October National Council Meeting was held in Toronto at the Royal Ontario Museum, thanks to arrangements made by Ian McGregor with the McLaughlin Planetarium. Everyone was delighted with the 'round table' atmosphere of the trustees' boardroom, with its high ceilings and cupola skylights. National Council members were also given free passes to the museum, one of Canada's finest.

The meeting was attended by six Kingston members—Terry Hicks as retired Treasurer, Leo Enright as Beginner's Observing Guide Editor, Walter MacDonald as Librarian, myself as Kingston representative, with Kim Hay, our alternate, and Kevin Kell as observers. I was pleased that Kim was able to attend, as it gave Council a chance to meet our new addition to the Membership and Promotion Committee!

Our President, Dr. Doug Hube, congratulated Dr. Sidney van den Bergh and Dr. George Volkoff for being awarded the Order of Canada.

While in Ontario, Dr. Hube announced plans to visit a number of RASC centres as part of a tradition set up a number of years ago.

It was announced that the Helen Sawyer Hogg lecture this coming year would be at CASCA meeting. At the General Assembly in Windsor, the speaker for the Ruth J. Northcott lecture will be Carolyn Shoemaker.

David Levy has been awarded an honorary doctorate in science by Queen's University, and will be receiving another honorary degree from Acadia University. On the subject of comets, correspondence indicated that the naming of comets by the I.A.U. would be paralleling the method used for minor planets.

A number of unattached members were elected to the Society. Membership Certificates were awarded to Rick DeRosa, Lisa Dickhout, Charles Fassel, Marvin Scott, Frank Scordino, and Bob Winder. Messier Certificates were awarded to Ben Gendre of Edmonton, and Howard Simkover of Ottawa.

It was mentioned that a CD ROM project is being undertaken by the Juniper Group, who are asking for input on science. For details, contact Randall Brooks (brooks@husky1.stmarys.ca).

Copyright of our Journal articles was discussed. The RASC will not be using a company to administer copyright. Permission to use articles will be considered on request to Rosemary Freeman.

A detailed report on the insurance issue was deferred until the return of Mike Watson, in South America for the solar eclipse. Centres are covered for public and mall displays, and special organized activities, if they notify National Office ahead of time and obtain a certificate of coverage. As yet, casual observing at centre observatories is not covered.

The updated RASC Manual is now available. Each centre secretary is being sent a copy. This includes an e-mail address list for centre executives and National Council members, as available at the time. A newer photocopier has been approved for National Office as the lease on the old one is up.

The interim Treasurer, Rajiv Gupta, presented a report, although no statements. A motion to reinvest the Society's funds in fixed income term deposits and GIC's, with a maximum fixed term of two years, was passed. The travel reimbursement policy was discussed. Members are encouraged to forward their comments to Rajiv.

Walter MacDonald, as Librarian, gave a report on the reorganization of the Library at National Office. The updated RASC library inventory will be issued on floppy disk to all centres in January 1995.

The Journal Editor, David Turner, reported that the number of papers published was down, but that the number of pages published had increased. He will be changing some of the section headings in the Journal. Doug Forbes of Newfoundland will be taking over the "Education Notes", formerly done by Roy Bishop. Due to eyesight problems, Marie Fidler has resigned as editorial assistant, and a replacement is being sought.

The Observer's Handbook was available earlier this year. An order form for the 1996 Handbook has been put into the 1995 edition, and an advertisement has been placed in Astronomy magazine to encourage more orders by the public.

Leo Enright talked about the Beginner's Observing Guide. He thanked Tony Sosnkowski of Prince Edward Island for his assistance in establishing a contact with the Boy Scouts of Canada, for marketing the Guide.

The publication distribution problem with the recent Journal mailing was addressed! This has been corrected by the University of Toronto Press and should not occur again. The question of whether the Handbooks should be mailed by National Office or distributed by individual centres was discussed. A brochure is being prepared to promote the Society's publications. A draft of it was circulated by Doug George.

Astronomy Day 1994 was reviewed. The date for 1995 will be Saturday, May 6, with activities encouraged for the week of May 1 to 7. The theme will be "The Stars Belong to Everyone", taken from the title of the book by Dr. Helen Hogg. The Society's concern with light pollution was encouraged as an auxiliary theme.

The Awards Committee named the recipient of the Service Award, to be officially announced at a later date. The Simon Newcomb Award, for writing in the RASC, was revised. Members are encouraged to submit entries—the prize now consists of a trophy, two books, and \$250.

Randall Brooks talked briefly about the Heritage Committee of CASCA, and the intention to coordinate a working group between CASCA and the RASC for historical purposes.

The Computer Use Committee commented on the ongoing question of how to get membership lists efficiently submitted to National Office.

General Assembly guidelines have been updated, and are available upon request.

Light pollution was touched on briefly, also the quest for recipients for a possible presentation at the Windsor General Assembly.

The Long Range Planning Committee mandate was presented by Peter Ceravolo. The committee will be reviewing the present state of the Society, and determining what changes are necessary in the Society's operation and activities. A report of recommendations will be produced.

The Publications Revitalization Committee, chaired by David Lane, presented a report on the status of the proposed new combined Journal/Bulletin publication. More suggestions and input from the general membership are invited—talk to David (dlane@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx), or one of Pat Kelly (pkelly@xxxxxx), Terry Dickinson, or Doug George (george@xxxxxx). They are also asking for potential writers, editors, and photographers to contact them.

A question of membership for new people for portions of a membership year was raised by Suzanne Moreau of the Montreal Centre. This will be investigated by the Finance Committee.

(Continued on Page 8)

## ANNUAL MEETING NOTES

The Executive Council and Committee Chairs for 1995 are as follows:

HONORARY PRESIDENT	David Levy	
PRESIDENT	Walter MacDonald	
VICE-PRESIDENT	Leo Enright	
SECRETARY	Ruth Hicks	
TREASURER	Kim Hay	
NEWSLETTER	Peter Kirk	(Replacing Bill Broderick)
LIBRARIAN	Kevin Kell	
NATIONAL COUNCIL REP	Cathy Hall	(Replacing Walter MacDonald)
ALTERNATE REP	Kim Hay	(Replacing Kevin Kell)
ASTRONOMY DAY	Cathy Hall	(Replacing Ian Levstein)
EDUCATION	Denise Sabatini	
PUBLICITY	Bill Broderick	
OBSERVING	Steven Manders	
LIGHT POLLUTION	Bill Broderick	
GA BID	Peggy Torney	

Best wishes to all of the above for the coming year.

Other business conducted at the Annual Meeting:

- \* The Observing Site Committee was disbanded.
- \* The Kingston Centre Mission Statement was approved.
- \* A motion to have the Centre donate \$5 a month towards the cost of operating the RASCNet was approved.
- \* Work on donating David Stokes' telescope to Viet Nam is ongoing.

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### MISSION STATEMENT OF THE RASC, KINGSTON CENTRE

The mission of the RASC, Kingston Centre is:

- \* in conjunction with the objectives of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, to promote and foster a greater awareness, understanding, and appreciation of astronomy and allied sciences among the public at large, and particularly among our youth and in the schools, and with groups and individuals who invite our assistance;
- \* to provide for our members a rich variety of services and programs related to their growth in, and enjoyment of, amateur astronomy;
- \* to acquire and maintain a library, astronomical equipment, and as need arises, other property, such as may be judged useful for pursuing our astronomical objectives;
- \* to work in conjunction with the Society and other Centres of the Society to further the progress and welfare of astronomy in Canada.

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I acknowledge with thanks the invaluable assistance of Leo Enright in drafting our Centre's new Mission Statement. (Bill Broderick)

## STARFEST '94

By Peggy Torney

Wow!!! What a wonderful gathering to attend! I know I'll be joining the festivities again next year.

As I had never been to a Star Party before, but had heard a great deal about them, I was a little leary of this one. There would be lots of people, many of whom I had heard about but few of whom I had met, astronomers of much greater skill and understanding than I, and generally lots to make me feel inadequate.

I was quite right on the first and second points. There were lots of people, over 500 on Saturday night, and many of them I had heard of, such as Roy Bishop, Peter Cerevolo and Steve O'Meara. There were astronomers of much greater skill and understanding. But there were a number of beginner and intermediate astronomers too. I was mistaken on the third point—in no way did I feel inadequate or idiotic.

Starfest takes place over three days and always in August (next year it begins on August 26). This year the Friday sessions involved astronomy and computers. Everything from basic astronomy programs, advanced astronomy programs providing links to professional data, CCD imaging and even computer drives for your telescope.

The evening was taken with observing. This involved wandering through the campground, stopping at interesting scopes and asking or being invited to have a look. Several of our members were quite impressed with a 20" reflector called "Obsession", and a 6"

Photo by Joanne Burns



The author and friends at Starfest '94

refractor that made Jupiter appear to hang in the sky like a Christmas ornament newly polished and recently decorated.

The sky was beautiful that night. The experts said that the transparency was a 10. The night was about as clear as we get. All I know is that we searched out about 16 Messier objects and marveled at what we saw until nebulae appeared to develop around every star. We were also introduced to the unique sounds of a star party—blow dryers at 2 a.m.!

Saturday's talks began at 10 a.m. with Terrence Dickinson and carried on all day with a break for lunch and about an hour before dinner was scheduled. These talks included videography, telescope mounts, astrophotography and atmospheric effects. All in all, quite a diverse group, something for everyone. There was also a dealer's display and a swap table where interesting things could be picked up, some cheap, others not so.

Dinner was catered. For this our group of neophytes was a little concerned when our leader and experienced Starfest attendee, Walter, informed us that he was not attending dinner. Then we were told to get at the front of the line as the food wasn't too bad if it was hot. Walter had his chuckle as we all moved into the line as soon as we saw that the tables were set up. We were pleasantly surprised. The meal was good.

After dinner there was the keynote speaker. This year the speaker was our Honorary President, David H. Levy. His topic: "The Death of a Friend—The Impact of Shoemaker-Levy 9 with Jupiter". If you have the opportunity to hear this, do so. The talk was excellent. The tent was filled to capacity and David received a standing ovation for several minutes. He modestly acknowledged this in honour of the Comet.

Jupiter was still visible when we left the tent and every telescope in the park turned to the planet to check on the progress of David's "family". The rest of Saturday night was a repetition of Friday without the heavy dew or the loud cursing over a television light. Meteors were prolific and many were fireballs (we were not at the peak of any shower). This night many of us observed Comet Nakamura-Nishamura-Macholz ("Nic-Mac"), Saturn, etc., and the Kingston group continued the Messier hunt.

Sunday involved a meeting for telescope-makers and those of us who were not involved packed up and went home in hopes of catching up on sleep.

Kingston was well-represented this year by ten of our regular meeting attendees and I hope to see even more of us there next year. Until then, good seeing.

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### **IT CAN HAPPEN TO ALMOST ANYONE!**

Up in one of the camping areas at Starfest, during the day, someone noticed a telescope on fire. It seems that the owner had pointed it skyward at some point and then turned his/her attention to something else. The sun had hoveled into position sometime later, shone right into the telescope tube, and set things burning. Lesson to be learned: NEVER--EVER--POINT YOUR TELESCOPE AT THE SUN WITHOUT TAKING PROPER PRECAUTIONS! AND REMEMBER, IF THE SUN AIN'T THERE NOW, IT MIGHT BE THERE LATER. TAKE CARE!

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*Do you imagine the universe is agitated? Go into the desert at night and look at the stars. This practice should answer the question. From the teachings of the Taoist sage Lao Tzu as quoted in the book Hua Hu Ching, by Brian Walker.*

## BUYING YOUR FIRST TELESCOPE

By Bill Broderick

A question often asked of experienced amateur astronomers is: What kind of telescope would you recommend for someone who's just beginning in astronomy?

For my part, the answer in three words is: **affordable, portable, workable**. The one thing that meets these three criteria right away is a pair of binoculars. The kind called 7 X 35s are just right. They're fairly inexpensive (under \$100), they're light, and they're very user-friendly. A pair of binoculars along with a basic sky-guide such as Terence Dickinson's **Nightwatch** or our Society's **Beginner's Observing Guide** will teach you to find your way around the sky and a lot of other things that you will want to know when you finally do get a telescope.

When you're ready to "step up" to a telescope, the above three criteria will still stand you in good stead. A **first telescope** should be one that you can fairly easily afford (no more than a few hundred dollars). It should be **portable**—in the sense that you can pick it up and carry it—and also in the sense that you can put it in the back of your car and drive out to a dark-sky site if you want to. And it should be very **workable**—very easy to use.

In my mind the one type of telescope that meets all of these criteria is a small **refractor** in the 60mm to 80mm range (2½" to 3"). The telescope should have an equatorial mount, preferably with slow-motion controls on both axes. It should have a small finder telescope mounted on the top. And the tripod should be adjustable as to height. I owned a Tasco 60mm refractor of the above description for over 20 years. It was an excellent "teacher" and a real joy to use.

A few words of caution are in order: Telescopes of the above description often come with a **small dark filter** labelled "**Sun Filter**" which screws into the eyepieces and is supposed to be **safe for solar observing**. **IT ISN'T!** The best thing you can do is take a hammer and break it! If you want to observe the sun, use the **projection method** (where the solar image is projected onto a screen of some kind). My telescope came with a screen that could be attached to the eye-end of the instrument. **NEVER USE AN EYEPIECE FILTER FOR SOLAR OBSERVING. THE INTENSE HEAT OF THE FOCUSED SUNLIGHT ON THE FILTER CAN CAUSE IT TO CRACK AND BREAK—EXPOSING YOUR EYE TO THE DIRECT FOCUSED RAYS OF THE SUN. INSTANT AND IRREPARABLE EYE DAMAGE CAN OCCUR. DON'T TAKE THE RISK.** You can also get a filter that fits over the front end of the telescope making it completely safe for solar observing.

Also, the eyepieces or oculars that come with a small telescope will likely be of the Japanese type, 0.9mm in diameter instead of 1¼". You can get an inexpensive adapter that will enable you to use the larger eyepieces, which are definitely more comfortable and show wider fields of view.

You should also make sure that the tripod and mounting are firm—not cheap and flimsy. A small amount of vibration or telescope shake is tolerable if it dies out in, say, three or four seconds or so. A very cheap mount, however, will vibrate or shake at the slightest touch or breeze and make serious observing almost impossible.

A final word of advice—and this applies not only to a **first scope** but to **any** telescope purchase. **Try to take it home ON APPROVAL**—so that if there is anything about it that is **unsatisfactory**, you can **return it** for a cash refund. In today's market poor optics and other components are not at all uncommon—even in well-known brands—and if you rely on the manufacturer's warranty to correct deficiencies, you can be hassling with them for months (or even years). Life is too short for that kind of nonsense. Just ask yourself which you'd rather be doing, observing, or fighting with somebody to get something fixed. It's **your money** you're spending—try to spend it well.

# NEWS AND NOTES

**NEW MEMBERS**—Kingston Centre welcomes the following new members: HANK BARTLETT, Newburgh; LEO BRODEUR, Belleville; CATHY HALL, transfer from Ottawa; KARIN and NEIL MCVEAN, Kingston; BRIAN PRICE, Gananoque; A. P. WARREN, Lombardy.

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**CHANGING OF THE GUARD**—It is with great pleasure that I pass the editorship of REGULUS over to Peter Kirk. I have enjoyed serving as your editor for the past five years, but one must move on. I wish Peter every success and hope he finds the job as enjoyable as I did.

To everyone who has contributed to REGULUS over the years, I say a fervent thank you. No editor can write a newsletter single-handedly. Your contributions were appreciated by me and they will be appreciated by Peter too. So keep your articles, artwork, poetry, photos, observing reports, etc., coming. Peter will need them every bit as much as I did.

As for me, I hope to lie back a little and take things a bit easier for awhile. But I'll be sending in my "two cents' worth" from time to time too. So have fun, Peter, and to everyone, Clear Skies!

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**THE END IS NIGH!**...for those who have not as yet renewed their memberships. As of October 1, a new membership year has begun and dues are now due once again. Anyone who has only forgotten, or who has been meaning to send their renewal along, please do it soon. Remember, there's been no change in membership fees. REGULAR MEMBERSHIP is still only \$45; YOUTH MEMBERSHIP is just \$25; and ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP (spouse or other family member) \$11.25. A LIFE MEMBERSHIP is \$900. So how about taking pen in hand and writing that cheque out now, payable to RASC, Kingston Centre. Kim Hay, our hardworking Treasurer, is looking for it.

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## **ASTRO-TIP: TURN YOUR TELRAD INTO A FINDER**

If you have a Telrad on your scope, you already know that it's a dandy device for aiming a telescope—providing you know where to aim. For picking up those faint fuzzy-wuzzies, however, you have to resort to your telescope's main optics. You may have wished on occasion that you had a finder too. Well, wish no more!

One night back in August, I got to thinking: The stars, etc., are at infinity, and the Telrad's reticle image is at "infinity" (which is why it works). If I were to look through the Telrad with my binoculars—also focused at infinity—I should have all or most of the benefits of a finder. I did and—viola!—it worked.

Considering that the cost of a finder complete with mounting brackets and such can cost \$200 to \$300, combining binoculars with a Telrad is a cheap but workable alternative. Another good reason to keep a pair of binoculars handy, n'est pas! (Bill Broderick)

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## **NATIONAL COUNCIL** (continued from page 3)

Computer bulletin board guidelines were presented by Randall Brooks, for consideration by those centres administering boards.

Lastly, but not briefly, the qualifications for the Messier and Finest NGC Certificates were revised to allow for two witnesses OR a declaration by the applicant and a copy of their observing log.

The date for the next National Council meeting was set for Saturday, February 18, 1995.

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