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Richard Ziegler, Maumee, Ohio

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Mark Davenport, Pinellas Park, Fla.



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"I've only had a chance to view once so far, but am thoroughly thrilled with it. Viewing from a (Santa Barbara, Cal.) residential front yard, the Orion Nebula was indeed a treat - reddish tinges on the predominating green, with many subtle wisps and lanes very clear. The Andromeda Galaxy was surprisingly bright, as was its companion." David Broad, Santa Barbara, Ca.



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the eclipse tours. Although I have no doubt that the island of Hawaii by itself is a wonderful place to visit, we did not want to spend our entire stay there. After all, it was to be our first visit to the islands, and we wanted to visit a few sites on Oahu, such as Pearl Harbor. We also hoped to see Maui. Unfortunately, none of the eclipse tours permitted this sort of flexibility, unless we wished to extend our tour at a significant additional cost. In fact, the price difference between any of the eclipse tours and the non-eclipse tour we ultimately decided to book is actually greater than that shown, since the non-eclipse tour includes so much more.

If you are trying to combine witnessing a cosmic event with a reasonably priced family vacation, you could well be disappointed. But if you are looking for a chance to view one of the most spectacular of all celestial events and do a little sightseeing on the side, any of these tours could be for you. How much does it cost to view a solar eclipse? Unfortunately, for the best eclipse for North American viewers in the foreseeable future, the cost will be high. But what person who has ever seen a solar eclipse can say that basking in seven minutes of totality isn't worth the price?

A BUNCH OF HAPPY (ASTRONOMY) CAMPERS

by Chris Sinclair

Advanced Astronomy Camp — Wow! What an opportunity. From the moment I heard about the University of Arizona's camp for young astronomers, I was excited. The first thing I did was write the university for more information about the camp. I eagerly leafed through the packet of goodies when it arrived and discovered, much to my dismay, that I would have to write an essay to get in. Disappointed by this news, I threw the packet into my room — a good alternative to the trash because I wouldn't have to drag it to the curb — and tried to forget about it.

But it didn't work. "Hold it!" I said to myself. "Just write the essay and maybe you'll be accepted!" So I looked at the essay choices and decided to write on "life in an hypothetical binary star system." One week and three trips to the library later, a very excited Chris Sinclair received acceptance into the camp.

The months between March and June of last year flew by, and before I knew it I was getting off a plane at the Tucson

airport (carrying a backpack loaded with astronomy books and a roll of film that cost a small fortune at the Dallas-Fort Worth airport). Joan Morrill, the camp coordinator, flagged me down, and then we were off to the U of A campus. After meeting the other 11 campers, we were off again, this time to the top of Mt. Lemmon where we would spend the week. That night we had a picnic and met our counselors — Don, Davy, Kim, and Todd. Kim made us play some really confusing game to help us learn each others' names. With that accomplished, we were taken to "meet the 60-inch telescope," one of three telescopes we had access to for the week. At about midnight we retired into the astronomers' dorms, tired from the long day.

Morning came early, and we prepared for a day of lectures. We dreaded the lectures at the beginning of the week, but by week's end we actually looked forward to them. Various professors and graduate students (including our counselors), spoke on some of the "hot topics" in astronomy — galaxy redshifts, the cosmic background radiation, the missing mass problem, and more. In addition to these topics, we also learned about such fundamental astronomical concepts as stellar evolution, stellar spectral features, and celestial mechanics. We learned the "science" of astronomy during the day, which prepared us for observing at night.

But the sheer beauty of the pristine mountain sky almost made us forget our daytime learning. Only one thing was better than being under the serene skies and that was being under the serene skies with BIG telescopes! Our three observing teams — the Scorpions, the Dolphins, and the Eagles — alternated between the 60-inch telescope, the 40-inch telescope, and the 16-inch Schmidt camera. My group (the Scorpions) went to the Schmidt first. There we took pictures of NGC 4565, NGC 4559, M101, and RR Lyrae. Although our pictures looked good on the original 5° negatives, minute guiding errors meant that they didn't enlarge well. One of the other teams, however, got some beautiful photos of the North America Nebula and Comet Levy.

At the 60-inch telescope, where our team spent the next night and two nights later in the week, we took exposures of several globular clusters for a research project, as well as spectra of various stars and nebulae.

We used the 40-inch scope to get a light curve of the variable star RR Lyrae. We took both photometric and photo-

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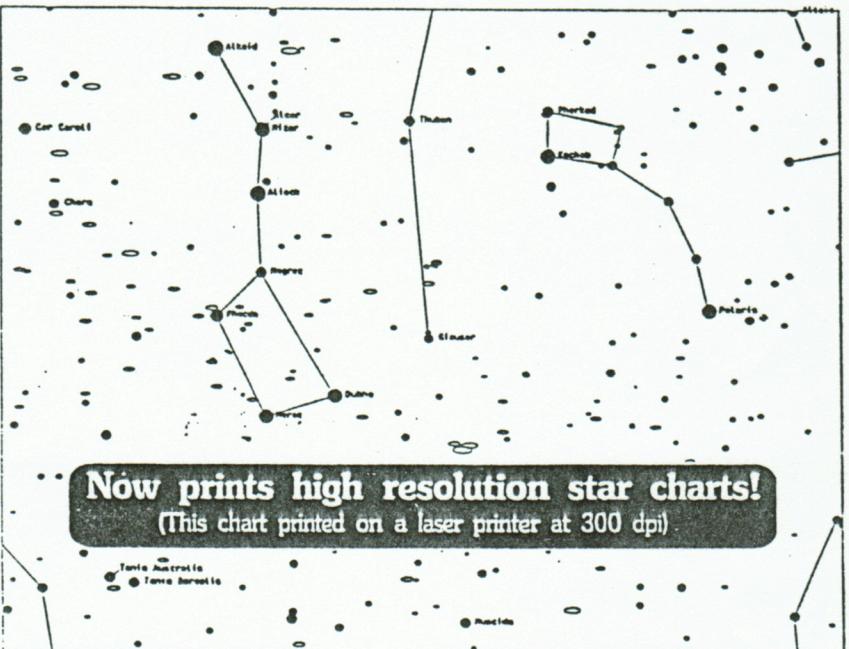
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graphic data to get enough information for this project. I was also able to take photographs of galaxies in Andromeda and Pegasus while the other campers were asleep under the stars. Of all the opportunities the camp offered, the observing was far and away my favorite.

After collecting all the information at the telescopes, we analyzed the data and prepared a short synopsis of the project results. In my group, Mike and I analyzed the globular cluster data and made a graph of the distances to the globulars. We assumed that all the globulars were the same size and luminosity, which (although not true) was close enough for our purposes. Other teams also worked on this project, and it was interesting to compare the results among the teams. Other projects displayed were the light curve of RR Lyrae and the use of a sextant to measure the circumference of Earth. Doing research based on our own observations gave us some real insight into the world of professional astronomy.

In addition to the work on Mt. Lemmon, we also took field trips to the University of Arizona Mirror Lab and to Mt. Hopkins. At the Mirror Lab, we saw a video of spin casting and then saw a mirror blank on which the technique was used. At Mount Hopkins we got to see the Multiple Mirror Telescope, whose six mirrors combine to make it the third-largest optical telescope in the world. The telescope was truly impressive, even though we didn't get a chance to look through it! We all felt that the 6-hour trip to see the Mirror Lab and the MMT was worth it.

Sadly, all good things must come to an end, and the astronomy camp was no exception. The last official part of camp was a graduation ceremony. The counselors presented several humorous (and often embarrassing) awards, apparently in an attempt to get back at us for keeping them up at night. But there were also serious awards — Most Promising Young Astronomer (male and female), Best Essay, Most Inquisitive, and Most Determined, among others.

The hard part came after all the awards were given out and everyone received diplomas — it was time to leave. Many of the campers promised to keep in touch, and there were more than a few teary eyes. As my new-found friends and I boarded planes heading in a dozen different directions, I'm sure we all shared the same thoughts about the incredible experiences we had at camp. It's a week in our lives that we'll remember for a long, long time. □