

Predictions

Nov '79

- November 3 General Meeting, Rosicrucian Planetarium, Park & Naglee, San Jose'. 7:30 pm. The speaker will be George Gabor from the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratories and the topic will be the past, present, and future design work on the new 400" the University of California is planning.
- November 3 Full Moon
- November 9 Board meeting at Wolfgang Hanisch's, 1815 Cleveland Avenue, San Jose'. 8:00 pm. 998-0861.
- November 10 Indoor Star Party, Los Gatos Red Cross building. 7:30 pm.
- November 17 SJAA Star Party at Loma Prieta.
- November 19 New Moon
- November 24 SJAA Star Party at Loma Prieta.
- December 1 General Meeting, Rosicrucian Planetarium, Park & Naglee, San Jose'. 7:30 pm. The speaker will be Ernie Pini and the lecture will be a double topic: "England's Stonehenge," and "An Eclipse Over America's Stonehenge." The latter subject is, of course, the subject of Ernie's new book of the same title.
- December 3 Full Moon
- December 7 Board meeting at Phil Hermsmeyer's, 20900 Alves Drive, Cupertino. 8:00 pm. 252-5529.
- December 8 Indoor Star Party, Los Gatos Red Cross building. 7:30 pm.
- December 15 SJAA Star Party at Loma Prieta.
- December 19 New Moon

Because the SJAA is ran on a lunar cycle, that is, our general meetings are held on full moon weekends so that new moon weekends are free for star parties and other real astronomical events, starting in January, 1980, the general meetings will be held towards the end of the month. The bulletin will still be sent out before the first of the month but there is going to be an eight week gap between the December and January general meetings. There will be plenty of star (brrrr) parties and indoor star parties to keep everyone going into the first of the year.

Gerry Rattley, pres. 732-0202

Denni Medlock, ed. 278-8475

Observations

October was a busy month but somehow there doesn't seem too much to report. The John H. Wolfe lecture on Pioneer 11 at the Rosicrucian absolutely filled the auditorium there and for that many thanks go out to the Rosicrucian Society, our SJAA publicity chairman Bruno Benassai, Gerry Rattley and Bob Fingerhut (who had to hand address 300 envelopes), and everyone who grabbed a neighbor, a job colleague, or some friends and made the lecture an overwhelming success. There's future hope that the good showing will warrant a Morrison Lecturer for the club.

The indoor star parties at the Los Gatos Red Cross building have been drawing in a good attendance. There's always something to talk about—eclipses, grazes, new astrophotos, someone's new mounting, someone's new telescope, plans for the next star party, even some plans for Riverside next May. (It's only 7 months away.) On October 13 the close-in SJAA star party at Sanborn Canyon was clouded out and the Red Cross building opened up instead. There were over twenty people drifting in and out, viewing some lunar eclipse slides, fondling Wolf's new Questar, and munching out on all the goodies Gary Rice, Gene Cisneros, and Kevin and I brought. (It's either feast or famine with food at indoor star parties!). Bob Fingerhut and Walt Schoendorf even worked on their respective mirrors. Now, if we could get Jack Zeiders to get working on his 16" again....I'm going to have my 14" finished before him if he doesn't look out!

Only a true astronomer would stand in the pouring rain on a mountain top and speculate outloud whether or not there's to be a star party that evening. On Saturday, October 20, that's about what happened when Kevin and I drove up to Mt. Hamilton to pay our bi-annual hommage to the 120". We ran into Patty Winter and Steve Greenburg there, who were planning on going to Digger Pines that weekend, and in the downpour we decided that the site at Digger Pines was probably a mud bowl and Fremont Peak would never clear by evening with the sky as dense as it was then. Why does it always rain on new moon weekends?!

Back down the hill and heading homeward the sky south of Fremont was cloudy and still raining, but alas! the sky north was crystal clear! Once home we woke up a few San Jose people via the phone that it was clearing and that we'd be at the peak. Everyone beat us down there.

About twenty people and thirteen telescopes showed up behind the ranger's house. (it's getting a bit crowded back there these days) Pete and Jay came down together and had to sit in the van until it had stopped raining, we later learned. When Kevin and I arrived it was foggy, but that soon cleared into a beautifully dark autumn sky. Jack Zeiders was there with his 10", Bobby Fingerhut with his C-8, Walt Schoendorf with his 12", and Charles Turner had three 'scopes: a 12", an 8", and a 6". Earl Watts brought his equipment down and John Cincotta showed up later on.

The problem then was not rain, but dewing. Outside of the normal puns associated with this phenomenon it became a real problem for everyone. Those with lens systems had to shut down almost immediately. (All the C-8's and Quantum's), then everyone's finders went, and lastly, the eyepieces. I was having a battle between keeping my finder clear, and then my eyepieces, and then my finder, etc., all the while watching my Norton's get soggy. About one a.m. the primaries dewed and everyone gave up. Charles Turner got back up around three a.m. and viewed the planets but I think the rest of us are going to wait until earlier next year before attempting that adventure. It's getting COLD!!!

My plea for a sturdy suggestion box has been answered by Wolfgang Hanisch who has offered to build the club a nice wood one. It's to be a combination suggestion-donation for munchies fund box. Rita Miram has been doing a great job with the refreshments at the general meetings but help, whether in time or \$'s, is always appreciated. Hopefully the box will be done soon.

This month's trivia department:

Wolfgang's phone number is 998-0861, not 1861.

April 26, 1980 is official Astronomy Day for next year.

Bulletin subscriptions that are up are: S.A. Aspey (Nov), John Clement (Dec), Bob Schalick (Dec), and Sam Tinnerell (Dec.). Subscriptions are \$5.00 a year.

The cost of Sky & Telescope has gone up and that means SJAA membership must also. Starting as of November new members will be charged \$18 annual, for Seniors, and \$12 for juniors. New memberships go to Cathy Pinhiero, 248-0210.

Chris Pratt reports new C.B. handles to be added to the list are: Frank Dibbell—Flaming Asteroid, and Bruno Benassai—The Astronomer.

Bulletin articles for December should be to me by November 18th. I'll print almost anything.

Thanks!
Denni

WANTED: Communications with a (SJAA member?) registrant at the AANC/NASA conference, who was selling old astronomy books at the swap meet on Saturday. I am interested in his copy of "Glass Giant of Palomar," if still available. Please respond to Leon Salanave, 2047 17th Avenue, San Francisco, 94116. (415) 661-6680, evenings.

"What are you, a sponge?"
Kevin M. to Bobby F.

"Oh, excuse me, lady. I thought you were a gas pump."

Jack Peterson

(Maybe Jack needs glasses, huh?)

COMET COMMENTS

At this time there is very little in the way of bright comet activity. The only two comets discovered by amateurs this year are fainter than magnitude 11.5, and two faint comets are still awaiting confirmation.

Comet Bradfield (1979c): Last month this comet was reported very faint and almost lost. Since then, reports have been received indicating it at magnitude 11-11.5 during mid-September. However, it has become more diffuse, making it harder to find. It is leaving the vicinity of the sun and moon and is expected to get fainter.

Comet Meier: Discovered by Rolf Meier of Ottawa, Canada, at 11.5 magnitude on the evening of September 19, this comet is getting slightly closer to the earth as it slowly pulls away from the sun. Having a direct, highly-inclined orbit, it reached its closest point to the sun (1.44 A.U., or about 130 million miles) on October 16. Estimates say it is faint (magnitude 11.5-12.5) and small (1'-1.5' across). An ephemeris (somewhat incomplete) follows.

Two Probable Comets Kowal: In early September Charles Kowal of the Palomar observatories discovered two cometary images on pictures taken on July 26 and 27. Since immediate follow-up work was not done, these two 18th. magnitude objects may never be found again.

Comet Tails: There is good evidence that comet nucleuses rotate. The rotation periods vary; Donati's Comet 1858 VI took 4.621 hours, Comet Encke takes 6.55 hours, and the great Comet Bennett 1970 II: 1.4 days.

Comet Meier (1979i)

Date	R.A.	Dec.	est. magnitude
Oct. 14	13hr 00.0m	60deg 38.4'	12.0
Oct. 19	12 54.8	59 22.0	
Oct. 24	12 49.6	58 13.6	11.9

Don Machholz

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ECLIPSE-CHASER'S SURVEY

Earth/space science instructor Eric Flescher of Washtenaw College has been surveying observers of last February's eclipse. His questions concern people's perceptions of their environment and their own feelings throughout the eclipse. Flescher has been receiving completed surveys from across the United States and Canada, and may extend his study into the 1980 Africa/India eclipse. Interested observers can obtain a survey by writing Eric Flescher, Earth Sciences Dept., Washtenaw College, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 48104.

COMMANDMENTS FOR STARGAZERS

1. THOU SHALT NOT SHATTER THE DARKNESS at the observing site. All man-made lights shalt thou eschew, save faint red ones.
2. THOU SHALT NOT ILLUMINATE thy car headlights, nor open thy car door without disconnecting thy dome light. Even a match is mightily displeasing in the dark-adapted eyes of the Lord.
3. THOU SHALT WALK CAREFULLY over the site, taking pains not to stumble over power lines, tripod legs, rattlesnakes, nor sleeping babes. The Lord has given thee free will to brake thin own neck, but thou must never jostle thy neighbor's equipment.
4. THOU SHALT NOT RAISE A DUST CLOUD with thy clumsy clod-hoppers. Neither shalt thou "burn rubber" with thy hot rod, even though thy best girl be watching thee.
5. TOOT NOT THY HORN, race not thy motor, expose not with loud talk thine tonsils to the night air. Even as the condemned man sayeth: "No noose is a good noose", so the onserver sayeth: "Noise annoys".
6. LONG SHALT THOU PONDER before thou seeketh to borrow thy neighbor's equipment. A screwdriver is perhaps reasonable—a telescope preposterous. Wouldst thou ask to borrow the corpse at a wake?
7. THOU SHALT PRAISE THY FELLOW observer's equipment. Even when thou findest naught of merit, thou canst at least laud the color of paint, and the darkness will absolve thee from lying. But keep a straight face, for verily, a straight face is the shortest distance between two deceptions.
8. THOU SHALT NOT DISTURB ANYONE who hath his eye glueth to a telescope. His mind may be light years away, exploring cosmic mysteries, unscrewing the inscrutable. He may be "tracking" a photograph—and though it may turn out badly, permit the "unguided" ones to spoil their own pictures.
9. SQUABBLE NOT WITH THINE WIFE. If she sighteth a flying saucer, belittle not her wisdom, yea, help her count the little green men, lest she seek a more agreeable companion. The plural of mouse is mice, and plural of louse, lice—but, nay, the plural of spouse is not spice: it's bigamy.
10. THOU SHALT CLEAN UP the observing site before thou leavest, and close all gates safely behind thee. These duties well behoove the amateur astronomers, whose mottos might well be said: "We try harder, ours is only the second oldest profession."

—from a fragment of parchment found under a boulder at Boulder, with thanks to the Bowie and the Salt Lake Astronomical Societies.
(reprinted from ASTRO-DIRECTORY NEWS)

SJAA MEMBER'S CORNER

by Frank Dibbell

James Van Nuland: Portrait of a serious amateur astronomer

Jim likes to tell the story of how he got interested in Astronomy: "It all began when I graduated from grade school. I had obtained a 35mm spyglass and I used it to scan the skies. The best way to do this was by laying on my back and looking up. I accomplished two things in this manner. One, I 'discovered' Saturn by accident, and two, I dropped the telescope in my eye, the second accomplishment immediately following the first." Spurred on by his new-found interest, Jim began to read all the books he could find on Astronomy. He became discouraged, however, because none of the books ever discussed amateur astronomy, and everything he read or saw seemed to imply that you needed a large telescope to see anything. Because of this, his interest waned, and for about 20 years thereafter he didn't have much interest in the subject.

Then around 1970 Jim again picked up his trusty 35mm spotting scope and rediscovered Saturn. The old interest had been rekindled, and a friend who he worked with at IBM introduced him to the SJAA. Around this time he read H.A. Rey's "The Stars - A New Way To See Them", which stimulated an interest in occultations. Noting this interest in occultations, Gerry Rattley and Dave Ambrose pressured a reluctant Jim into grazes. The rest is history. Jim, a member of IOTA, now leads all lunar grazing expeditions for the SJAA, and reports to the club regularly of all upcoming grazing and occultation events.

Other astronomical interests include tracking Jupiter's Red Spot, tracking sunspots, and the mathematics of astronomy. With regard to Jupiter's Red Spot, Jim formulated Van Nuland's Equation, which calculates when the Red Spot is visible. (If you wish to view the Red Spot, Jim's a good person to check with. He can tell you the best times to see it.) Describing himself as a patience-limited individual, he is not into telescope making, and feels that it is perfectly honorable to purchase a manufactured instrument.

If anyone has an interest in occultations or grazes, and wants to learn more about them and perhaps get involved in a grazing expedition, talk to Jim at any general meeting or indoor star party. Be warned... his enthusiasm is catching.

ANSWERS to the autumn constellation scramble from last month's bulletin:
by Doug Buettner
(in order, of course....)

ANDROMEDA
AQUARIUS
ARIES
CAPRICORNUS
CASSIOPEIA
CEPHEUS
CETUS
CYGNUS
DELPHINUS
EQUULEUS
GRUS
INDUS

LACERTA
LYRA
MICROSCOPIUM
PEGASUS
PERSEUS
PHOENIX
PISCES
PISCIS AUSTRINUS
SAGITTA
SCULPTOR
TELESCOPIUM
TRIANGULUM

VULPECULA

The brightest stars were:

SIRIUS
CANOPUS
a CENTAURI
VEGA
ARCTURUS
RIGEL
PROCYON
ACHERNAR

Want something a little harder? Well, try this. Arrange the following stars in order of decreasing apparent magnitude.

CAPELLA
RIGEL
ARCTURUS
PROCYON
VEGA

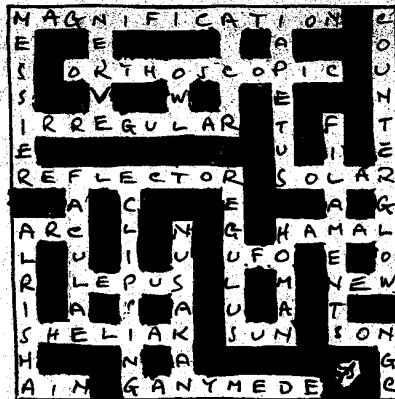
ACHEMAR
a CENTAURI
CANOPUS
SIRIUS
b CENTAURI

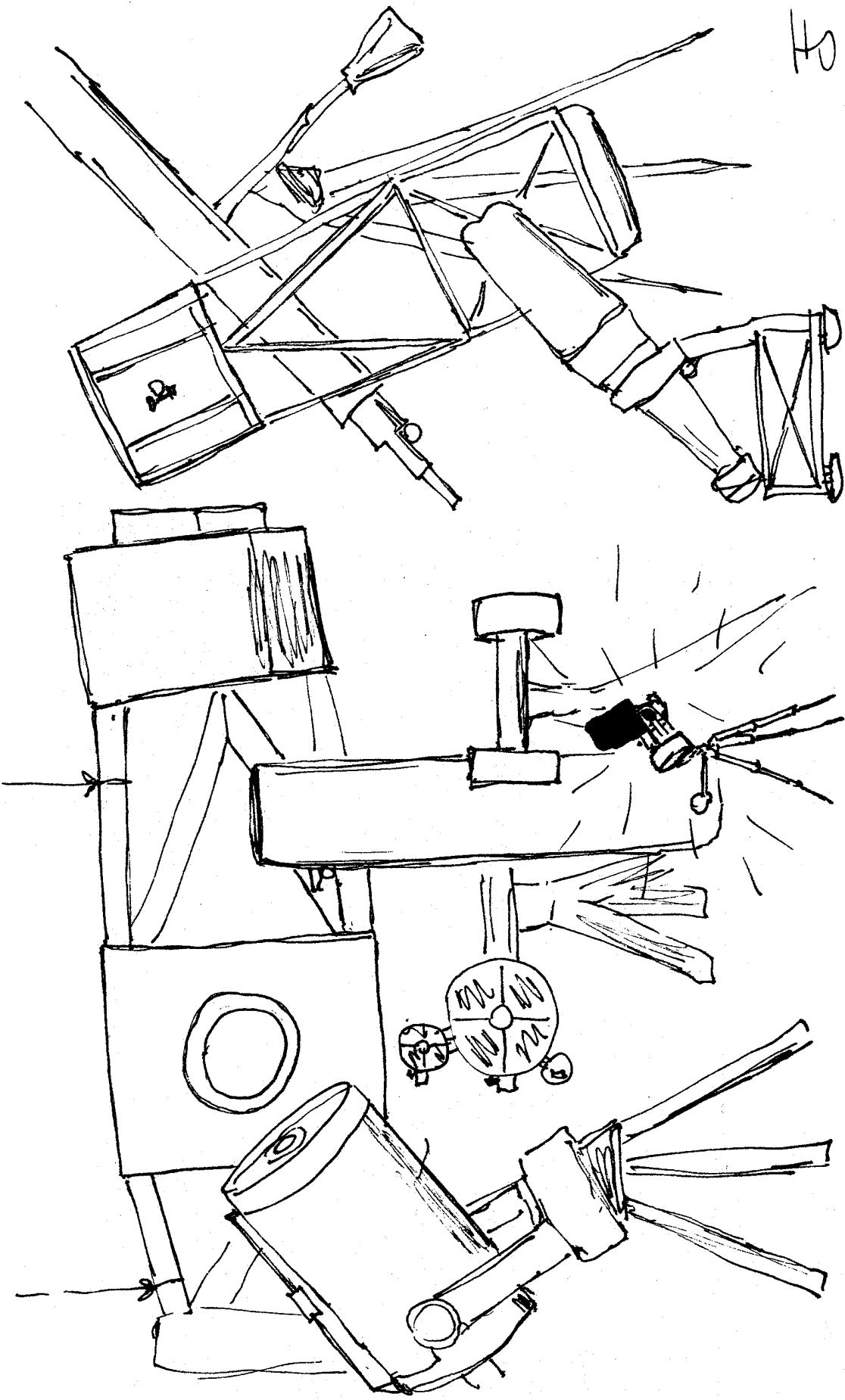
Answers next month.

"Yeah, I'd like to join the San Jose Astronomical Bunch."
anonymous, overheard at a indoor star party.

(Would that make us the SJAB?)

Due to an unscheduled trip to the dead letter office, the answers to September's Skyword Puzzle by Fred Braniff are now being printed in November's bulletin....





-- WOLF PICKED THE WRONG NIGHT TO
SHOW OFF HIS NEW QUESTAR TO THE S.T.A. --