

Stardust

A Monthly Newsletter of the
Royal Astronomical Society of Canada
Edmonton, Centre

DECEMBER, 1966

NOVEMBER MEETING LIVELIEST IN YEARS

There was little doubt in anyone's mind that when the meeting of November 16th broke up, it had been one of the most productive and informative in a long time. And nearly all members praised the featured speaker, Robert Allin, for this conclusion. Mr. Allin's talk on Quasars was most enlightening. But the strongest measure of its impact was in the stimulating discussion it prompted amongst some of the younger members of the Centre. Questions from the floor were numerous, but always well-phrased and thought-out. Often the questions anticipated points the speaker was about to make, but Mr. Allin patiently fielded each, further amplifying a rather difficult subject.



Mr. Allin



Jeff Davis

The meeting was the first under the chairmanship of Dr. George Cumming, the new president of the Centre. Following the reading of the minutes, various Council members presented their reports, and members of the new council were introduced.

The one grave disappointment of the evening was to hear from Mr. Franklin Loehde that there is to be NO STAR NIGHT this year. Apparently there are no major displays available from the American Space agency for exhibit at this time.

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FLYING SAUCERS, AGAIN !!

In the past several weeks, there have been several reports of Unidentified Flying objects in Alberta. Calgary, Valleyview, and Edmonton have all had sightings, and interest is high again. An interesting note to the Calgary UFOs: As director of the Edmonton planetarium, your editor was called by two Calgary newspapers for comment; on the other hand, Edmonton radio stations and the Journal carried comments by the Calgary Planetarium Director, Sig Wieser !

Anyhoo, it all points to a lively meeting of the Centre on December 8th.

THE EDMONTON CENTRE, ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA, WILL HOLD ITS REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING IN THE QUEEN ELIZABETH PLANETARIUM, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8TH AT 8:15 pm.

The featured speaker will be Mr. Gareth Shearman, Director of Educational Activities for the Centre. Mr. Shearman will speak on....FLYING SAUCERS. Incidentally, Mr. Shearman is a noted authority on the subject, being both president of the Edmonton UFO society, and a Martian.

And the December meeting will also see the beginning of a series of talks on the design and construction of amateur telescopes. Mr. Robert Allin, Centre vice-president will deliver the first talk, with other members to follow in future months.

MEMBERS OF COUNCIL ARE TO MEET AT 7:45 PM THE EVENING OF THE MEETING.

PLANETARIUM NOTES

By the time you receive STARDUST, the traditional "Star of Christmas" show will have begun at the Queen Elizabeth Planetarium. A rather unorthodox opening to the show should make it a must even for those who have seen it before.

On January 6th, "The Worlds of Galileo" will begin. This show deals with the observations made by Galileo, and how our knowledge of "his" worlds has changed over the centuries.

Early in March, the show "The Way of All Stars" will be underway, dealing with the Milky Way, the evolution of stars, and our place in the universe.

It is hoped that a new basic star projector will be installed in the Star theatre in 1967. Already the planetarium has a new dome and newly upholstered seats. A new projector would complete the new look. Meanwhile, plans for expansion of the Planetarium are moving along quite well, with 1968 or 1969 the most likely dates for the beginning of construction.

AN APOLOGY

A lack of space prohibits us from running the editorial mentioned last month and a book review.

NEWS FROM THE SKY

We assume you've all heard of the fantastic Leonid meteor shower of mid-November, so we need add nothing to that here.

December is a notoriously unpredictable month for observers. Nonetheless, this December has several compensating factors, notably a favorable morning elongation of Mercury, another edge-on performance of the rings of Saturn, and convenient hours for watching the grandest planet of all: Jupiter.

For Occultation enthusiasts (if there are any left) there will be seven Ingress situations from the 18th to 25th. Consult with Franklin Loehde if you wish to participate in this regular act of self-sacrifice and masochism.

Many people enthusiastic about Astronomy spend a lot of time wondering what they can do that is challenging yet within the scope of modest budgets and limited seeing. Herewith are a few ideas to conjure with:

1. Comet and Nova Search: At this very moment there are two or three undiscovered comets and novae in the sky. To ferret them out, you need have a good working knowledge of the sky or one particular area of the sky. Binoculars are excellent for comet searching. Why not concentrate on the northern horizon, an area not accessible to the avid comet-hunters in the United States and Japan.
 2. Aurora and Sunspots : Keep a record of auroral displays and the number of sunspots daily. See if you can correlate the two.
 3. Meteor Observing : The major showers get the lion's share of the attention. Try keeping a record of sporadic meteors in between the showers. Send results to the secretary, Mr. George Williams c/o the Planetarium, or to Fred Tauber.
 4. Planets : Studies of the various members of the solar system could keep everyone in the Centre active continually. Drawings, charts, photographs...all these add to our knowledge of the planets, Moon, and asteroids.
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Pictures of the Moon are common enough. This one by William Cable should help to encourage some of the younger members of the Centre to put cameras and small telescopes to work.

Incidentally, Mr. Cable, who works with a six-inch reflector, reports that the rings of Saturn are just barely visible at present. That wont last. Theyll be gone again in a few days.



OTHER NOTES

As you know, Canada has withdrawn its support from McGill University's High Altitude Research Project (HARP). To see Canada's principal space effort end this way is a bitter blow to those of us who feel that Canada has both the talent and the resources to make a substantial contribution to this field.

A recent letter from R.C. Stacey, Laboratory manager of the Space Research Institute of McGill, struck both a humorous and poignant note when we read it. We had inquired about display material on H.A.R.P. for use by the Planetarium and Star Night. Mr. Stacey very generously has agreed to send us two of the missiles used in the project for display.

As Mr. Stacey explained : "The two vehicles are scheduled for firing approximately the second week of January, 1967, therefore it is quite in order for you to retain them till the end of December."

WELL, IF THERE'S ANOTHER AIR STRIKE. WE'LL KNOW HOW TO GET THEM BACK TO BARBADOS !!

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