

LUNAR OCCULTATIONS FOR MARCH

Date	Star	Mag.	Age	Phase	E.S.T.
Feb. 29-Mar. 1	214 G. Vir.	6.4	18.4	R	12:16.8 A.M.
Mar. 17	51 Tau	5.6	5.5	D	9:19.7 P.M.
17	53 Tau	5.4	5.5	D	10:04.0 P.M.
18	N Tau	5.1	6.5	D	9:27.3 P.M.
19-20	16 Gem	6.1	7.6	D	12:42.2 A.M.
21-22	29 Cnc	5.9	9.7	D	2:12.6 A.M.

Observational Data

Mercury is too near the sun for observation in March. Venus is a brilliant object in the western sky at sunset and sets several hours later. Mars is in Sagittarius and may be seen low in the southeast for a few hours before sunrise. Jupiter is well up in the east at sunset and sets a few hours before sunrise. Saturn rises before midnight and is past the meridian at sunrise. It is stationary in right ascension on the 12th and will then begin to move westward among the stars.

---A. L. White

L. W. HOLLAND writes us from 501 - 32nd Avenue North, St. Petersburg 4, Florida. He has joined the St. Petersburg Astronomers' Club. He tells of observing CANOPUS which is 15° above the southern horizon there at 9 P. M.

THE REV. GEORGE S. RAPIER, S. M. died suddenly on February 15. Although retired, he was actively engaged in astronomical research at the time of his death. He had requested the Editor of STAR DUST to prepare a list of materials on the planets only two days before his death. He intended making the list available to a group of people who was interested in astronomy. The Editor of STAR DUST will be glad to forward this list to the group, as Father Rapier wished, if the group will identify itself.

 Jewell Boling, Editor, 1717 P Street, N. W. NO 7-9521

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STAR DUST

National Capital Astronomers

March 1956

Vol. 13, No. 7

FEBRUARY CALENDAR

- Mar. 3 "THE EARTH AS OUR SPACE SHIP," Dr. Leah Allen, (Sat.) former Director Williams Observatory, Hood College, Frederic, Maryland, Department of Commerce Auditorium, 8:15 P.M.
- Mar. 9 GROUP OBSERVING at the NCA 5" at the Naval Observatory with Hoy Walls. Your NCA membership card will let you in the gate. Time: Beginning about 7:30 P.M. Take a raincheck in case of overcast sky.
- Mar. 17 St. Patrick's Day and begorra, "Let's Talk About the SUN," with Dr. Gant at our DISCUSSION GROUP in the Commerce Dept. Foyer, 8: P. M.

Each Saturday Morning. Telescope making class at Chevy Chase Community Center, 5600 block of Connecticut Avenue, 9-12 A. M. For more information contact Hoy Walls at OLiver 2-5395.

"THE EARTH AS OUR SPACE SHIP" -- Most people don't realize that not only does the earth move, but it moves through space with terrific velocity. Dr. Allen will discuss the motions of the earth and show how the astronomers have determined both how fast the earth is going and its varied movements. Do you know that the earth is going around the center of the Milky Way at 612,000 miles an hour? In other words, in the thirty seconds it takes for you to read this lecture circular (and decide to come to the lecture), the earth has traveled 5,100 miles! Dr. Allen is the former Director Williams Observatory of Hood College. She has had a long and distinguished career in astronomy.

APPOINTMENTS: At the February meeting, announcement was made of the following appointments by NCA Prexy Dana Law. AS A NOMINATING COMMITTEE for next year's slate of officers:

Grace Sholz, Chairman
Elizabeth Goerner
Glenn Neville

and as Head of a Special NCA Committee to keep our members informed on ASTRONOMICAL PHASES OF THE INTERNATIONAL GEOPHYSICAL YEAR:

Leith Holloway

CONVENTION CHAIRMAN for the Middle East Region League Convention to be held in Washington the week end of May 5, with NCA the host society

Mabel Sterns

MR. G. R. WRIGHT HAS BEEN APPOINTED Chairman of the Committee on Satellite Observing for the Astronomical League. He will work directly with the staff of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Laboratory to lay plans for satellite observing by the amateur and to coordinate the procedures and findings of amateurs in the member societies of the Astronomical League.

MRS. ERNEST EDEN NORRIS, SR., sent Valentine Greetings to the NCA, twenty-five dollars to be used for printing, complimenting Mrs. Alston, Miss Sterns, and Miss Boling. thank you, Mrs. Norris!

Research may then be done upon the precession of the equinoxes, and upon the motions which make it up. By a step-down process, star positions are compared with positions of distant galaxies to find solar drift and galactic rotation components. Research is also done on the proper motions of stars, using the coordinates thus derived, and upon stellar distances.

Astrometry, then, is the foundation upon which much astronomical work rests.

---Bob Moore

NEW MEMBERS
All Juniors

- *Ernest M Holt, 1520 N. 17th Street, Arlington 9, Va.
JA 5-5828
- *Peter Long, 607 Forrester St., S. E., Washington 20, D.C.
JO 2-5347
- *June Miller, 603 Galveston St., S. E., Washington 20, D.C.
JO 2-26091

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

Eve Cutler, 3417 N. Toronto Street, Falls Church, Va.
Elizabeth M. Fazekas, 3900 16th St., N.W., Apt. 1628,
Washington 11, D. C.

ESTELLE ISHERWOOD is picking up ideas at the Smithsonian for her science exhibit in April. It will be, as she describes it, a study of Messier nebula and star clusters. Estelle has been sky-gazing since last year with the 8" and 4" telescopes that she built to bring her honorable mention in the District and Prince Georges science fairs last year. Her investment was \$40. and 1½ years of work.

PAPERS AND EXHIBITS FOR MIAMI CONVENTION. The Astronomical League has issued its call for papers for presentation at the national convention in Miami, July 2-5, 1956. We hope you plan to come, but even if you don't find that possible, we'd be glad to find someone else to read your paper for you. Papers for JUNIORS as well as from REGULAR MEMBERS are sought. Titles and outlines of papers should be sent within a month to: Arthur P. Smith, Jr., 426 S.W. 26th Road, Miami 36, Florida. If you have ideas about exhibits at Miami, please write to: T. T. Tripp, 1520 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Coral Gables, Florida.

---Grace C. Scholz

ASTROMETRY: At the February meeting, members of the NCA were treated to a lecture by Mr. Francis Scott who spoke on astrometry, one of the lesser known fields of astronomical work. This science of star position, according to Mr. Scott, has brought no startling discoveries. Nevertheless, it is a keystone in the structure of modern astronomy.

The primary instrument of astrometry is the transit circle, a telescope which is mounted in such a way that only stars along its meridian are visible. In conjunction with photographic timing devices and measuring circles, it permits measurements of up to .25 minutes of arc in accuracy.

In order to make measurements, a system of celestial coordinates must be set up. This involves locating the celestial pole and the vernal equinox. The pole is located by taking two readings, 12 hours apart, of a circumpolar star at its upper and lower culminations, and taking the average of its two elevations. Using this value, declination of all stars may be found. Finding the vernal equinox involves taking readings on the sun as related to stars near the estimated vernal equinox, and of the polar distances of the sun, through the year. Having taken readings on 200-300 such stars, the position of the vernal equinox is computed, using the average of all values as the true one.

MIDDLE EAST REGION CONVENTION in Washington May 4-6 expected to draw a record registration for the regional event. That Friday evening International Business Machines will show a movie in color of the history and present use of punch cards and electric business machines, followed by an illustrated lecture on their application to astronomy.

Observing, instruments, and other topics will be discussed on Saturday in the Commerce auditorium. After dinner together, conventioners will return to the auditorium to hear Dr. Joseph Kaplan speak on "The International Geophysical Year and the Space Frontier."

A new wrinkle Sunday morning will be the workshop for leaders of junior astronomers, conducted by Ben Adelman. The juniors themselves will have a session also.

Success of the exhibit will depend largely on entries from the National Capital Astronomers. Dana Law will supervise the displays. Start now to put your scopes and "ingenuities" in good working order.

Besides making arrangements with IEM, Dr. Gant (1726 M. Street N.W.) is calling for papers on observing. Discuss with him what you would like to present.

Leo Schoenig, 825 Tripoli Street, Pittsburgh, Pa., has consented to lead the instrumentation session. He injects such vitality that his discussions are among the most popular sessions of conventions. Let him know at once what you can add to that part of the program.

Leith Holloway, Emerson 2-8167, is coordinating the program and planning the junior session. NCA juniors no doubt have some original contributions to make and should call Mr. Holloway for time on the schedule.

Continued

Benjamin Adelman who has introduced novel ideas in junior programs, will conduct a workshop for leaders. He also is managing publicity for the convention.

Frances Heisey is secretary of the convention committee, Nelson Griggs will recommend suitable accommodations, and Mr. and Mrs. John Lund are in charge of printing and duplicating.

Betty Fazekas is making arrangements for the dinner on Saturday, reserving space at nearby restaurants for lunch on Saturday, and will engage a photographer for the group picture.

Mrs. Lillian Gregor and daughter, Roberta, will supervise registration and information. The NCA with over a hundred members can boost the convention by registering well in advance at the nominal fee of one dollar. Registration forms will be distributed soon.
---Mabel Sterns, Convention Chairman

PROPOSED CHANGES IN NCA BY-LAWS, presented at the monthly meeting held on February 4, 1956.

The following proposed changes in dues are to be effective September 1, 1956. The proposed change with respect to two members of the same family living at the same address (Article I, Sections 1(b)(1) and 3(d)), will be effective immediately. The membership has voted its approval of this change.

ARTICLE I

Section 1(a)

CHANGE THE SENTENCE THAT NOW READS: "Junior members may elect the privilege of S&T in which case the annual dues shall be \$3.50."

TO READ: "Junior members may elect the privilege of S&T in which case the annual dues shall be \$4.00."

Section 1(b)(1). Regular membership.

CHANGE THE SECTION THAT NOW READS: "Annual dues, individual, \$5.00; husband and wife, \$7.00. Two dollars of the above dues shall be applied to the privilege of membership that includes S&T."

TO READ: "Annual dues, individual, \$5.50; two members of the same family living at the same address, \$7.50. Two dollars and fifty cents of the above dues shall be applied to the privilege of membership that includes SKY AND TELESCOPE."

Section 1(b)

CHANGE THE SENTENCE THAT NOW BEGINS: "However present life members may elect this privilege upon the payment of \$2.00 per year, provided that...."

TO READ: "However, present life members may elect this privilege upon the payment of \$2.50 per year, provided that...."

Section 3(b), (c) and (d)

CHANGE THESE SECTIONS WHICH NOW READ:

- (b) Junior members with S&T, 29 cents per month.
- (c) Regular members, individual, 42 cents per month.
- (d) Regular members, husband and wife, 58 cents per month.

TO READ:

- (b) Junior members with S&T, 33 cents per month
- (c) Regular members, individual, 46 cents per month
- (d) Regular members, two members of the same family living at the same address, 63 cents per month.

ROBERT T. MOORE emerged as one of the forty finalists in the SCIENCE TALENT SEARCH. What did it take? "A questioning, imaginative mind that wonders about such things as fitting together "convex congruent polygons."
JOEL F. LUBAR was one of the 14 in the area who were among the 260 winners of honorable mention awards.