

STAR DUST
National Capital Astronomers
Washington, D. C.

MR. JENKINS has repaired the drive on the 5" at a cost of \$5.00. Mr. Benfer gave invaluable assistance. Thanks from the NCA.

LEAGUE BULLETIN is to be sent to all NCA'ers every two months.

RICHMOND AND NORFOLK AMATEUR ASTRONOMERS want Washington to set up a group to help put on the League Convention in North Carolina at the time of the annular eclipse of the sun next September.

IRENE WARTHEN reports about 20 people working on mirrors in Room 319, Roosevelt High School, Tuesdays and Fridays. About nine mirrors were finished last season.

THE 5" LIST. The following persons have taken the test in using the Clark 5" refractor and are on the list authorized to use it: Cilley, Skirm, North, Little, Holloway, Herreshoff, Robinson, Sterns, Warthen, Simpson, St. Johns, Wernitz, Scott, Boling, Wells, Farrar, Matthews, Davis, Sherman, Jenkins, Fleming, Ludlow, Weinstein, Forster, Crowell, Lankford, Perkins, White, Miller, Edmonds, Gregory, Weir, Wright, Walls, Rhynsburger, Sturgill, and Jones.

HARRIET HUTZLER, formerly an NCA'er and now doing graduate work in astronomy at the University of Michigan was a visitor at the September meeting.

IRVING MALITSKY who has been on leave from the Bureau of Standards while doing work in physics at the College of the City of New York has returned to the Bureau.

October 1950 Vol. 8, No. 1

OCTOBER CALENDAR

- Oct. 7 Sat. Dr. L. L. Rice, Warebeck, Virginia, "OUR MYSTERIOUS UNIVERSE." 8:15 p. m. Commerce Auditorium.
- Oct. 13-14 AAVSO Convention in Boston, Mass.
- Oct. 21 Sat. "THE HISTORY OF ASTRONOMY," Discussion Group, Commerce Foyer. Research Material Furnished by Dr. E. W. Woolard of Naval Observatory. Leader to be announced.
- Oct. 22 Sun. "EXPLORING THE SKY", National Capital Parks outing. Fort Reno Park, 41st Street and Chesapeake, N. W. Telescope owners, please bring telescopes.
- Oct. 28 Sat. Junior NCA Meeting, Science Service Center.

Tuesday and Friday, 7-10 p. m. Telescope making class, Roosevelt High School, Room 319, 13th and Upshur, N. W. Miss Irene Warthen, instructor. Telephone Lockwood 5-1237. Note: Miss Warthen will be present only on Tuesdays. For further details call Miss Warthen.

Open Nights at Naval Observatory Discontinued. The "open house" of September 27 was the last. These nights will be greatly missed by NCA'ers as well as the public who have enjoyed the privilege so much these past few years. The problem of establishing facilities for the use of the NCA 5" Clark refractor, now housed on the Naval Observatory grounds, will be taken up at coming NCA meetings.

Jewell Boling, Editor 1717 P Street, N. W. DU-2969

DR. L. L. RICE, speaks Saturday, October 7, on "Our Mysterious Universe." Not so long ago, man regarded himself as the center and crowning glory of the Universe. Now he finds that the world he lives in is but a tiny speck in the great Galactic System and the latter is one of myriads of galaxies.

What is described as the greatest of all physical mysteries is the kind of universe we live in. Dr. Rice will point out some of the many mysterious phenomena that astronomers are investigating. He will illustrate his talk with slides prepared for him by the Yerkes Observatory.

Dr. Rice has retired from the field of education after serving as president of the Castle Heights Military Academy, Lebanon, Tennessee, and as chancellor and president of Cumberland University. He has written a number of books, among them being "Relativity for the Man in the Street."

NOMINATIONS FOR TRUSTEE to fill the unexpired term of David Rotbart are to be made from the floor at the October 7 meeting. Election was not held in September as a quorum was not present.

APPRECIATION OF BOB WRIGHT'S faithful and original service to the NCA as president from 1948 to 1950 is coming in from all corners of the NCA. Bob was able to get things done and to get the skills of the right person to do them. His efficiency and dependability will not be matched for years to come. Deep gratitude goes to Bob Wright for his excellent work in astronomical activities.

MR. LYONS will appoint a person to test applicants in using the 5" in order to facilitate adding names to the list, as soon as the Trustees can take the matter under consideration.

INSTRUCTIONS IN USE OF THE 5" are posted at the telescope.

BUZZ GROUPS PRODUCE

Amateur astronomers can arrive at independent decisions in small groups if given a chance. There were 41 NCA'ers in five groups. They were very active groups - busy, concentrated, interested. Unanimity was rare. Forty or more members agreed on only four questions: 1. The lecture is necessary; 2. There are other things necessary besides telescopes and observing in astronomy clubs; 3. We should learn more astronomy; 4. Highly specialized knowledge is not absolutely necessary for amateur astronomers.

It was not simple at the Recapitulation Session, a week after the Buzz Groups, to assess our current position with respect to activities. Without the Questionnaire we would have been in difficult straits. So, on the basis of the two techniques, we concluded that all opinions tend to more astronomical activity, per se: observing in social groups; discussion and learning about astronomy. The constellations are very popular; so are planets. Most NCA'ers want to use this score of telescopes we have. Many (19) want to take an astronomy course, the same one under Dr. Wells. Almost everybody loves to visit observatories and attend exhibits and go on observing parties. Most of us want permanent quarters and are worried about the 5" -- but some count the cost in dollars.

Tangible results:

Astronomy Course - the same one as last year if we get an instructor and if enough sign up.

Discussion Groups (not technical) - as announced.

Speakers - as usual.

More Buzz Groups - to get widespread expression of opinion, to raise questions, to keep things alive and undominated by leaders.

Further study on how to observe more and how to use our telescopes.

Exhibits regularly - set up and organized by Mabel Sterns.

Visits to other astronomical groups and observatories. Picnics, parties, etc., if organized by "the Fans."

Further study on a permanent home.

—Ted Jones

PARTIAL CALENDAR FOR THE COMING YEAR

The following partial calendar for the year comes as a result of the first meeting - Buzz Groups and Recapitulation. The Discussion Groups will naturally be formed out of the persons who indicated their interest in the respective subjects: History - 23 votes; Cosmogonies - 21 votes; Facts about stars - 21 votes; Philosophy - 20 votes; Mythology - 15 votes; Romance of Astronomy - 16 votes; Biographies - 19.

- November 4 Regular monthly meeting. Dr. John S. Hall of Naval Observatory. Subject to be announced.
- November Astronomical Exhibit featuring November astronomical subjects. Put on by Mabel Sterns. In the Central Library, Seventh and New York Avenue.
- November 18 Theories of Cosmogonies. Rhynsburger and the Junior NCA. Discussion Group.
- December 2 Dr. Dorrit Hofleit of Harvard. (Note: This is not a definite date as yet.)
- December 16 Little Known and Odd Facts about Stars. (Each member is to dig up a fact.) Christmas is near.
- January 20 Philosophical Implications of Astronomical Research. Rhynsburger. Discussion Group.
- February 17 Biographies of Famous Astronomers.
- March 17 Mythological Origins of Constellations.
- April 21 The Romance of Astronomy.
- May Hobby Show and Exhibit. Mabel Sterns.

GROTE REBER ON ECLIPSE EXPEDITION TO ALASKA.

During the total eclipse in September Grote Reber and his party took noise radiometers at different frequencies to determine what effects could be detected. It is hoped a fuller account may be secured for a future edition of Star Dust.

MABEL STERNS WHO IS PUTTING ON AN ASTRONOMICAL EXHIBIT

in the Central Library featuring astronomy in November would appreciate being contacted by anyone who has astronomical subjects which might be interesting to exhibit. The exhibit will run during November. Call her at DI 9422.

RICHMOND PICNIC. National Capital Astronomers, together with amateur astronomers of Norfolk and elsewhere in Virginia and North Carolina enjoyed the lavish hospitality of the Richmond Astronomical Society August 27. The entire party motored to the auditorium at St. Catherine's School where President T.W. Stone of Richmond opened the meeting with the "hope that this will be the first of an annual affair." Bob Wright reviewed the discussion at Wellesley of the annular eclipse September 1, 1951 and the desirability of holding a convention in its path. The delegation agreed to take the responsibility if a site were selected in Virginia or North Carolina, pending confirmation by their parent societies. Mr. Eason of the American Meteor Society urged more meteor counting with records and charts.

Novel badges were designed by Mr. Beaufort Ragland who photographed illustrations in a celestial atlas published in 1798. These pictures, 2 3/4" x 4", suspended by a ribbon, are fine keepsakes of the party.

Next, the motorcade wound through town to Mr. Stone's lawn. A round of lemonade preceded inspection of his observatory over the garage. Gadgeteers admired the individual touches in the design of the mounting and personally we fell for the squint eliminator at the eyepiece. Richmond astronomers set up their telescopes and it was interesting to note that they were all refractors—not a hand-ground mirror in the lot. A hearty picnic supper, ice cream, cookies in celestial shapes, and elaborate cake and three astronomical sound movies ended the evening.

—Mabel Sterns