

88 Lorne Ave.,
St. Catharines, Ont.
Wed. Sept 19, 1962

Mr. Jas. W. A. Low,
411 Briston Ave.,
St. Lambert, P.Q.

Dear Sir:

So far this month of September I have not had too much luck following comet 1961e. On Sept. 5th it was difficult to see in 7x50's. approximate magnitude estimated at 8.^m. Next night (Sept 6th) it was still harder to see in 7x50's. On Sept 7th it was not easy in 8" 58 reflector at 63x.

By this time Comet Humason was near dec. -30° , about 15° above the horizon here in St. Catharines. Many nights the ground haze reaches past this height. As a result of this (as well as of moonlight), I lost the comet until last night, Sept 18, 1962. I searched many nights with my 4" 55 reflector but without success. Last night I juggled out my 8" reflector and after a half hour or so of searching, finally spotted the comet. It was very faint - a dim, roughly ocular patch, barely distinguishable from the background sky. I estimated its brightness at a full magnitude fainter than the globular cluster M55, which was about 6° west & 2° north of the comet. Its position at 21:45 E.S.T. seemed to me to be:

RA = 19 hrs - 58 min.

DEC = -32° , $-40'$

This position is in close agreement with the predictions. However it seems very much fainter than the

magnitude estimates.

Possibly comet Humason has been throwing off material under solar excitation as one would be led to believe by the account & pictures in the article in September's issue of Sky and Telescope. On the other hand, maybe it is my proximity to industries that affects the transparency of my Southern Sky. None of my books or charts lists the magnitude of M30 or M55 which are near the path of Comet Humason. If you have that information I would appreciate having it.

On the night of Sept. 10th, 1962 Our Niagara Falls Centre held a public star night at which we attempted a timing of the occultation of Saturn by the moon. We should have had a tape recorder, but had to make do with 2 stop watches. An attempt to find Comet 1961e was foiled by bright moonlight.

That is about everything of interest at this time. I have started checking C. & M. area #215 this month. It is a very difficult one with its southern declination of -20° to -30° . I find it blotted out by haze quite often, while my other areas are very clear & bright, although area #99 (0° to -10°) sometimes suffers from the same drawback. This month has seen more cloudy nights than August, which was exceptionally good for me.

Are there many Comets active in the C. & M. Section now?
Hurs to clear skies,

Hugh M.A. Mullan,
Niagara Falls Centre.

P.S. Mr. C.P. Gardner is home from hospital, but will not be doing much outside work until his throat heals. In the meantime he has started things rolling on a mount for a 10" reflector!

added
Sept 19/62
10.00 PM

Dear Sir:

It was cloudy this evening but cleared up after dark so I scooted out with my little 4" reflector & managed to spot Comet Humason. It was very faint - more so than in the 8" reflector last night. Tonight is much clearer than last night, M55 being just visible in 7x50 binoculars.

I tried to find some real faint object to test the transparency and finally settled on a globular cluster in Perseus, - N.C.C. 6229, which was not far from the zenith. It could be seen with not too much difficulty. This is another object about which I have no information.

(OVER)

Maybe you could oblige me with
its magnitude also.

I have not been able to see any
tail on Comet Humason since Sept. 1,
1962. It has certainly faded rapidly
when you consider it was visible to the
unaided eye on Aug. 20, 1962 -
although I must admit it was an
exceptionally clear night in an
area where clear nights seem to
be the rule & not the exception as
it is here in St. Catharines.

Sincerely,

Hugh MacLellan.

P.S. I find it difficult to make mag-
nitude estimates when the comet is so
faint - a little either side of focus the
image seems to disappear into the
background. Do you have any advice
on this matter?