THE O.A.A. STAR

Volume 1, No. 2 January 8, 1967.

Our circulation has been doubled for this second issue of our paper, so that now all members of the club can benefit from its contents. Since many of you cannot attend our meetings this newsletter serves, or, at least, should serve as the most important binding force within the group. Perhaps it will spur some of you to take a more active interest in the club and in astronomy.

NO MORE POLITICS AT GENERAL MEETINGS

As of December 31, 1966, there will occur at general meetings no discussion of old business and/or new business. From then on, all general meetings will be strictly astronomical. At the meeting held on that date, at which Carl Jorgenson, Steve Ashe, Kenny Wiener, David Levy, and Arnie Baker, President, were present, the following resolution was passed:

"All old business and new business will be discussed only at executive or special meetings.

"An executive meeting consists of three or more members of the executive.

"A special meeting consists of four or more members of the O.A.A.

"Any member who doesn't approve of any statute passed at an executive meeting may call and attend another executive meeting to rediscuss the issue.

"General meetings will follow this procedure (to annul the proceedure now in our constitution).

1.) Call to order.
2.) Talk and/or discussion relating to astronomy.
3.) Adjournment. "

It can be seen that this bylaw has far-reaching implications, in that members and visitors planning on attending and astronomy meeting will receive just that. It is not the purpose of this club to teach young people the methods of political debate; rather, members want to learn as much astronomy as possible from the organization.

Notice that the executive cannot, by this bylaw, obtain dictatorial control of the organization. If enough members want a law annulled they can do so at executive or at special meetings. At executive meetings they would have to persuade the officers to vote it down but at a special meeting the membership could vote the law itself. And general meetings will deal solely with astronomy.

Remember that this newsletter will publish letters pertaining to this subject. The Editor's address appears at the end of this issue. Four cents stamp in the city; five cents outside.

NEW MEMBER

Steve E. Ashe, who attended his second meeting on December 31, was voted a member of the Organization of Amateur Astronomers.

Steve is, to put it rather mildly, an active observers. During 1966 he was active in variable star observing, messier hunting(he has seen over half the list), meteor shower observing and aurora chocking. His many meteor watches have made him the envy of some of his peers. (Continued on page 2.)

During 1966 Steven checked the sky 299 times for aurora. During his recent visit to Montreal(December 26 to January 1) he made plans to start asteroid observing and he took on six new comet and nova search areas. Although Steve doesn't plan to return to Montreal for some time he intends to keep in touch with us. No doubt the club will benefit from his membership. If any member(or anyone else) wants to write Steve, his address is

Mr. Steven E. Ashe
P.O. Box 105
Crompond, New York, 10517.
U.S.A.

MONTHLY R.A.A.S.C. MEETING

The regular monthly meeting of the Montreal Centre of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada will be held in the Macdonald Physics Building, McGill University, on Thursday, January 12, 1967 at 8:15 P.M. The guest speaker will be DR. L. A. HIGGS from the Radio and Electrical Engineering Division of the National Research Council, Ottawa. His subject will be: "STRUCTURE AND EVOLUTION OF THE GALACTIC SYSTEM"(with particular emphasis on the role of radio astronomy and on the observation programme of the new 46-metre radio telescope of the Algonquin Radio Observatory in Ontario.

The public is cordially invited. Admission is free.

(From Notice to RASC members, Jan. '67)

Many of us have the idea that these meetings are "above our heads" and hence we don't attend them. But they really are worthwhile and generally easily comprehensible to our limited intelligence. So plan on attending this Thursday, won't you? See you there. By the way, the Physics Building is across the way from the front entrance of the large, whitish-grey Otto Maas Chemistry Building, on McGill campus. If you have trouble finding it ask the guard at the front gates.

In addition to these monthly meetings, the Montreal Centre offers to the public a free talk on some aspect of astronomy at the Centre's observatory behind Molson Stadium, near Douglas Hall. Wednesday observations meetings there are limited, however, to Montreal Centre members.

EDITORIAL

Isn't it amazing that so many people can identify a not-too-common tree or flower, but that few can point out Sirius and Capella, though these stars are with us more than half the year? Observing is really a very simple activity. You simply open your eyes and perceive what lies around and above you. It is not difficult to learn to find your way about the sky. If, every clear night, you find Sirius and Capella, and their neighboring stars, and the constellations nearby, and, later, star patterns not so close by, by the end of the winter you will have a fair knowledge of what lies above you. During the summer you can start with either the big dipper of Ursa Major or with the summer triangle of Vega, Deneb and Altair. It is not hard. Try it. But try it every clear night.

OBSERVING PROGRAMMES FOR THE AMATEUR ASTRONOMER

By David H. Levy

During 1967 this group hopes to expand its observing programme slightly. Below are certain suggestions for observing programmes, some of which are extremely simple to conduct. If you'd like more information on any one project you can call me at 489-0270. Or write me. My address appears elsewhere.

Comet and Nova Searching.

About six years ago James W. Low of the R.A.S.C. divided the sky into over four hundred small regions. The aim was that an observer would check one area every clear night for possible comets and/or novae. Now, over 70 of these areas have been assigned to observers, and over fifteen hundred checks were made during 1966.

The project is simple. All you need is a pair of binoculars and a will to go out for a very short while every clear night. You are assigned an area whose measurements are ten degrees on a side. You make a chart of said area and you go out and compare each star in the sky to each star on your chart. Naturally your first check will take a little time, and so will your second, but after a while you get to know the stars in your region pretty well and a check is but the task of a couple of minutes. If you see something unusual let me know right away.

If you don't have binoculars you can check the whole sky each clear night down to about third magnitude. If you have a fair knowledge of the constellation outlines this is really easy. A star that shouldn't be there may stand out to you'like a sore thumb.' Checking the bright horizon just after sunset or just before sunrise may net you a bright comet some day. Comet Arend in 1957 was found that way. In 1910 a comet was discovered in broad daylight, very near the sun, and in 1965 Comet Ikeya-Seki was visible at midday as it rounded the sun. So checking the sky in the immediate Sun's vicinity every day can be helpful too.

A more advanced style of comet hunting is the telescopic variety. Point your 'scope (preferably a wide-angle glass should be somewhere in the works) at an area of the sky. Check the field of view for any fuzzy patches; move on to the next field. Check out any fuzzy patches with an atlas. A comet, when faint, resembles a patch of haze. But so do galaxies, nebulae and star clusters, so don't get too excited when you see something. Count on at least two hundred solid hours of searching before you find a comet this way.

Photographing an area of the sky, and then checking the photograph with an atlas or two is another way to do this work.

Double Stars.

For most doubles you do need a telescope. The aim is to check a star that is reported on an atlas as being double. See if you can separate it using different eyepiece powers. At the moment a friendly competition is in progress to separate 127 double stars, selected from Norton's Star Atlas.

When a filar micrometer is obtained by the Montreal Centre, R.A.S.C., the project will be expanded to include measuring the separations and position angles of doubles. Detailed information: Carl Jorgensen, 727 Champagneur St., Outremont, P.Q. . Telephone 276-7433.

Observing Programmes, continued.

Auroras.

Aurora Borealis, or northern lights, are probably caused by solar flares related to sunspots. The observer, with a pad of report forms, reports the changing forms of a display according to a prestudied system (available on request). The unaided eye and perhaps a filter are the only tools needed for this work. If no display is seen a simple negative report is completed. Each observation takes only a minute or so but it helps if you observe frequently on a clearn night.

Sunspots.

A telescope, obviously, is required for telescopic solar observations, where you count and plot the sunspots each day. A Solar Observation Kit is available to interested people. A far more simpler style of solar observing involves nothing but a solar filter. Each day you check the sun for naked-eye sunspots. You plot any spots on a little disk. If there are no spots you record that fact accordingly. In any case, there is probably no type of observing that is "easier", yet still challenging, that naked-eye sunspot observing. The report form is simplicityz itself.

Lunar Occultations.

A telescope, stopwatch and short-wave time signals are required. You know beforehand, via the Observer's Handbook of the R.A.S.C., the time, to a tenth of a minute, of the predicted phenomena whereby the moon will pass in front of a star. You time either the star's "going in" (ingress) or its "popping out" (egress)to the nearest tenth of a second. During 1967 it is hoped to obtain 100 timings.

Other observations.

Astronomy covers a wide range of disciplines, and therefore there are hundreds of things to observe. Plotting the nightly course of an asteroid, observing a comet or a nova, timing Jovian satellite phenomena are among them. Future issues of the newsletter, I hope, will deal with these topics, and with two very important projects heretofore unmentioned, that is, Lunar and Planetary Observing. Variable Stars is a field so large that the largest astronomical society in the United States is devoted almost entirely to it. Meteor Shower Observations can be conducted in groups; some with observing eclipses.

Recording Observations.

An observation is not an observation unless it is properly recorded. As For all the projects mentioned here recording forms are available. Most are elementary to fill out.

THE O.A.A. STAR
is the newsletter of the Organization of Amateur Astronomers, Montreal. Articles and letters are solicited. Please address communications to the editor.

EDITOR: David H. Levy, 818 Upper Belmont Avenue, Montreal 6, P.Q. 486-0270.
PRODUCTION: Steven M. Ashe