

Editorial

One of the most fascinating books of 1969 is *Whole Earth Catalog: Access to Tools*, published by Portola Institute Inc. The catalog, according to its introduction, “functions as an evaluation and access device. An item is listed if it is deemed 1) useful as a tool, 2) relevant to independent education, 3) high quality or low cost and 4) easily available by mail.” It was quite a surprise when a colleague recently pointed out to me that among the approximately 300 items in the catalog was—the OBSERVER’S HANDBOOK.

I should perhaps point out, for honesty’s sake, that *Whole Earth Catalog* is not a deep philosophical treatise; in fact, many would consider it rather “way out”. Nevertheless, it is a tribute to the past editors of the HANDBOOK that it should be considered, at least in some sense of the word, “useful”.

In what sense? Surely not only because it can help one to tell time or direction, or even because it serves as a “field guide to the skies” as *Peterson* serves as a field guide to the birds. Rather I think that the HANDBOOK helps us to look outward and to expand our consciousness at a time when it is all too easy to get bogged down on the technological treadmill.

Each member of our Society can contribute to this expansion in his own way: by organizing and participating in Centre activities, by co-operating with local observatories, planetaria and schools and in general by sharing his interest in astronomy with his friends and neighbours. I hope that the HANDBOOK will continue to serve as a useful tool; suggestions for its improvement are always gratefully received by the editor.

Planetary Research

The Planetary Section continues to be one of the most active in our Society, and its activity is producing some interesting results. On the basis of observations made between March and June 1969, there appears to be a very convincing correlation between the intensity of the South Equatorial Belt of Jupiter and the position of the satellite Callisto. The intensity varies with a period of slightly more than 16 days; the synodic period of Callisto is about 16.5 days. The Belt is darkest when Callisto is at western elongation.

These results are reported in *Bulletin* 11 of the Planetary Section; Co-ordinator: Kenneth E. Chilton.

Comets

The discovery of Comet Bennett, reported in the February NEWSLETTER, was followed by the discovery on Jan. 27 of yet another comet, Daido-Fujikawa (1970a). This comet moved rapidly to perihelion, passing within 4° of the sun on Feb. 16. According to *IAU Circular* 2206, it is expected to fade rapidly, reaching magnitude + 14 by April.

Comet Bennett has now moved into the northern sky. An accurate predicted position for April 4 is R.A. $22^{\text{h}}30^{\text{m}}$ Dec. $+27^{\circ}02'$, magnitude +2.5. Less accurate predictions are: for April 9: R.A. $22^{\text{h}}48^{\text{m}}$, Dec. $+37^{\circ}26'$; for April 14: R.A. $23^{\text{h}}10^{\text{m}}$, Dec. $+45^{\circ}35'$, magnitude +3.8; for April 19: R.A. $23^{\text{h}}33^{\text{m}}$ Dec. $+51^{\circ}32'$; for April 24: R.A. $23^{\text{h}}57^{\text{m}}$, Dec. $+55^{\circ}53'$, magnitude +5.1.

Comet Tago-Sato-Kosaka is fading rapidly. Its position in April will be: on April 14: R.A. $5^{\text{h}}18^{\text{m}}$ Dec. $+51^{\circ}04'$; on April 24: R.A. $5^{\text{h}}39^{\text{m}}$, Dec. $+51^{\circ}44'$, magnitude +11.9.

Nova Serpentis

The winter has brought yet another rare celestial event: a naked-eye nova. The discovery, by Honda on Feb. 13, was announced in *IAU Circular* 2212. The position is: R.A. $18^{\text{h}}28^{\text{m}}16^{\text{s}}$ Dec. $+2^{\circ}34'42''$, in Serpens near Ophiuchus. At discovery, the nova was of magnitude +7.0; it rose rapidly to about +4.4 where it remained for about two weeks; it has now (March 20) declined to about +6.

The rather slow decline suggests that Nova Serpentis may be a relatively "slow" nova, though probably not as slow as Nova Delphini 1967. The latter, although it may have faded from memory, has not faded from view, according to the following note from Mr. Herbert A. Lange, reprinted from *'Scope*, the newsletter of the Toronto Centre:

The nova (Deiphini) has now settled down to what seems to be a very slow decline: it has faded by only 0.4 magnitude, from 7.9 to 8.3 during the period Sept. 3 to Dec. 4, 1969. The excitement of the earlier days has gone, and I no longer observe the star on every clear night. It is now part of my regular variable star program and I observe it every 20 days.

As seen in the 8-inch at 70 X, the nova is very blue in colour and has remained so throughout the last three months.

April 24-25

A very interesting article appears in the journal *Nature* (vol. **225**, pg. 255, January 17, 1970) regarding the April 25, 1969 fireball over the British Isles. On the basis of over 300 observations, chiefly by amateurs, authors K. B. Hindley and H. G. Miles have established the trajectory of the object and the elements of its orbit prior to encountering the earth. They point out that these orbital elements are almost identical to those of a fireball seen over New Jersey, U.S.A. on April 24, 1962, implying a common origin for the two objects. The authors conclude by saying that "The period April 23 to 26 should be covered by amateur and professional groups in future years in the hope of recording further fireballs and meteorite falls."

It is interesting to note that one of the six objects listed by Dr. Millman in *Meteor News*, this issue, fell on April 25, 1966.

New Centre of the Society

After many years of dormancy, the Saskatoon Centre is again active. Having received the unanimous support of the National Council of the Society on Sept. 26, the organizers of the new Saskatoon Centre held their first meeting on Nov. 17, in the Observatory of the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon Campus. Among the 33 founding members is our National President, Professor J. E. Kennedy. F. A. Holden is President of the new Centre, G. N. Patterson is Secretary.

From the Library

In answer to every prospective member's question: "What benefits does membership in the RASC offer me?", the National Library ought to be high on the list of replies. Paradoxically, the wealth of material available from the Library is used much less frequently than we would like. Your librarian is convinced that one reason for this apparent lack of interest is simply that you are unaware of what we have to offer. We look forward to the NEWSLETTER as an important medium for communicating Library News to you, and we hope that "From the Library" will become a regular feature. Hopefully, you in turn will write to us with suggestions, requests and ideas.

Having spent less than a year in this capacity, your librarian is just now beginning to feel at home. The former librarian, Dr. J. R. Percy, began the mammoth task of cataloguing the Library's 2000 books and brought the task within sight of completion. We are confident that the catalogue, when finished, will make the Library much more useful.

From time to time, we benefit from gifts from generous members. Our esteemed past president, Miss R. J. Northcott, bequeathed all her books to the Society. Over sixty of these are of general astronomical interest, and have been inscribed with her name and added to our collection.

The slide collection, which does get wide usage by the membership, is continually growing. We are again indebted to a generous member, Mr. John Howell, past president of Calgary Centre, for donating several excellent slides of the 1963 eclipse taken from the North-West Territories.

TORONTO

R. PETER BROUGHTON

Constellation Corner

The Crown Jewels. There is great contentment to be had in scanning the starry dome above, untrammelled by telescopes, binoculars, or any other aids. One of the prettiest of the spring and summer groups is Ariadne's Crown,

or Corona Borealis, the Northern Crown. It is a perfect little semicircle of jewels, located between Boötes and Hercules.

To find it, first locate the Big Dipper. Then notice that a line drawn between the two middle stars of the handle points almost exactly toward the Crown which is now rising in the east. Another method is to find the bright stars Arcturus and Vega. The Crown lies midway between them.

Several decades ago, rays of light began to stream out toward earth from this constellation. Tonight they are just entering your eye as you look at them, enjoying the sight of this group of pretty twinklers which forms the most nearly perfect circle of any group in the sky.

The stars in the Crown are not brilliant. Indeed, it may take a little searching to find the group at all, but once located, it will always strike the eye immediately. Besides, it is one of the very few constellations which resemble the objects after which they are called.

The Legend of Ariadne. Ariadne was the daughter of the king of Crete, who kept the ferocious Minotaur in a labyrinth. Every year the unhappy people of Athens were forced to send seven youths and seven maidens to be devoured by this fearsome creature, half man, half bull.

Theseus, son of Athens' king, resolved to kill the monster, and with this in mind, volunteered as one of the victims. When he appeared with his fellow unfortunates before King Minos of Crete, daughter Ariadne promptly fell in love with him.

Her resolve to save his life was as strong as his to free his country. She gave him a sword and a ball of thread. Unwinding the thread as he followed the twisting paths of the labyrinth, he came upon the Minotaur and slew it, easily retracing his steps with the help of the thread.

He escaped, of course, taking the fair princess with him. But our hero had no further use for the poor girl once his purpose had been accomplished. He took off one night while she lay sleeping, a poor return for the life she had given him.

Even the gods, who notoriously had little feeling for anything, were annoyed by this unheroic behaviour. They gave Ariadne a golden crown to replace the embraces of a husband. On her death, her crown was placed in the sky, a perpetual memorial of unrequited love.

ST. JOHN'S

MRS. DORA RUSSELL

Postscript

There may still be a few registered delegates to the 1969 General Assembly in Toronto who have not yet received their Group Photograph. Would any such persons please write to: Dr. J. R. Percy, Department of Astronomy, University of Toronto, and their Group Photograph will be sent forthwith.